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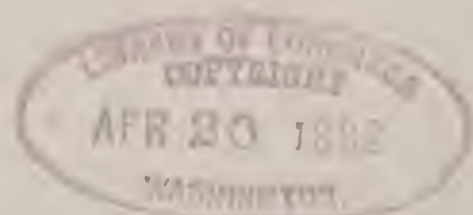
VOL. VI.

Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

THE REVISED TEXT; WITH COMMENTS SELECTED FROM THE CHOICEST, MOST ILLUMINATING
AND HELPFUL THOUGHTS OF THE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES.

revised
PREPARED BY
J. GLENTWORTH BUTLER, D.D.

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17843 X

NEW YORK:
BUTLER BIBLE-WORK COMPANY,
85 BIBLE HOUSE.

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1892.

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NOTE.—A few changes have been made in the Revised Text, mainly in accordance with the rendering preferred by the American Committee ; and some variant readings have been added in parenthesis. B.

INTRODUCTORY.

I. FIVE POETICAL BOOKS — CODE OF THE HEBREW WISDOM.

ONE word resplendent with light, lying at the foundation of all the Jewish conceptions, set their minds at rest upon the origin and nature of things : *In the beginning God created*. Hence the greater minds among the Jews directed their thoughts to the problems of practical life. The result of these labors is given us in five books, which form, as it were, the code of the Hebrew wisdom. The subjects treated in them relate, not to the study of Being, but to the purely practical question of *right living*; they even exhaust it. These books are—Job, in which is revealed the art of *suffering* well; the Psalms, which give us a model of true *prayer*; Proverbs, in which is taught the art of *acting* rightly in all circumstances; Ecclesiastes, which treats of the right manner of *enjoying* the good things granted to man here below; and finally, in the Song of Songs, the wisdom of the Israelites rises to the contemplation of the supreme art—that of true and pure *love*. *Godet*.

The Hebrew classical poetry of the Solomonic school, which is devoted to Wisdom (Khokma), has a common character in all the five principal poetical books—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Canticles, and Ecclesiastes—which is so unique and so clearly displayed that there can be no possible mistaking it wherever it may be found; nor could a work of that kind have been produced outside of the mental and spiritual atmosphere in which these originated. On its surface and by the help of its external accessories, the Book of Job has an archaic and an Arabic aspect; but below these, as its chief quality, are the soul and substance of the Hebrew Wisdom. *Curry*.

The Book of Job belongs distinctively to the so-called Wisdom literature of the Hebrews; being indeed, of all the products of that literature, the grandest in the reach and ripeness of its thought, and the completest in its literary form. What the Hebrews called Wisdom corresponds to what other nations call philosophy.

The books classified under that name contain the thoughts of earnest and observant minds on life, on conduct, on worldly prudence, on Divine things, on the mystery that encompasses the world. And they introduce us to a class of men, of whom otherwise little is known, the “wise men,” who in an unofficial way, and with objects less purely religious, taught and had influence along with priests and prophets in shaping the spiritual life of the Hebrew people. “The law shall not perish from the priest,” said the men who rejected Jeremiah’s prediction of evil (18 : 18), “nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.” Each of these three classes had its work to do in the Hebrew state, and each has left its record in the Hebrew literature. The Law and the Prophets, mighty as are their influence and doctrine, leave an important part unsupplied; they are supplemented, as they need to be, by the utterances of Wisdom. J. F. G.

II. THE BOOK OF JOB.

The Book of Job does not appear to come exactly into either of the two great divisions of Hebrew poetry. It has epic features. It has a beginning, middle, end. It has the unities of time, place, and subject. It has its centre—one great thought, around which all others revolve. It has much of the charm of a lively drama. The six or eight characters which appear in it have marked characteristic differences. The book has great resemblance to a Greek tragedy, *e.g.*, the Philoctetes of Sophocles. Again, it is a wonderful composition for its lyrical feeling. In pathos, in lofty flights of imagination, in delicate imagery, it takes a very high rank. Then it has brief, sententious proverbs, sometimes extending into lengthened exhortations and highly wrought descriptions. The book exhibits the highest reach of all Hebrew poetry and art. B. B. E.—In boldness of imagery and descriptive power, in fervid eloquence and sublimity of thought, there is nothing equal to

it in the whole range of ancient and modern poetry. "The language of the Book of Job," says M. Renan, "is at once the most limpid, condensed, and classical Hebrew. We find in it all the qualities of the antique style, such as conciseness, frequent obscurity and abruptness of expression, as if the words were struck out by blows of a hammer, together with a breadth of phrase which seems always to leave some hidden meaning to be discerned, and a delightful ring like that of hard and pure metal." *F. Bowen.*

I call the Book of Job, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble book; all men's book. It is our first oldest statement of the never-ending problem—man's destiny and God's ways with him here on this earth. And all in such free, flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity, in its epic melody and repose of reconciliation. Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind, so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit. *Thomas Carlyle.*

It is without exaggeration that one in our own time has written of this extraordinary book as "a book of which it is to say too little to say it is unequalled of its kind, and which will one day, perhaps, when it is allowed to stand upon its own merits, be seen towering up alone far away above all the poetry of the world." Its author lives in the imperishable monument of his genius. "With his unsullied name," says Herder, "he has consigned to oblivion all that was earthly; and leaving his book for a memorial below, is engaged in a yet nobler song in that world where the voice of sorrow and mourning is unheard, and where the morning stars sing together." *Aglen.*

Its most striking features are depth and boldness of speculative inquiry, of research, not only into what may be known of the dealings of God with man, but of the principles on which those dealings rest. The characters stand out each and all in broad, strong outline, with traits of surpassing delicacy and vigor. The historical narrative is clear and rapid, with the simplicity and grace of antique letters; the dialogues full of vehement outbursts, vivid imagery, and sudden alternations of passionate struggles, and

deep, calm, earnest contemplation of spiritual truths. The reader is irresistibly impressed with the reality of the transactions, with the truth and naturalness of the feelings brought into play. Nor is this impression weakened when we consider the style of Job. All critics recognize its grand, archaic character. Firm, compact, sonorous as the ring of pure metal, severe and at times rugged, yet always dignified and majestic, the style belongs essentially to a period when thought was slow, and laboring for utterance, but profound and intensely concentrated, full of weighty and oracular sayings, such as were fit to be engraved upon rocks with a pen of iron and in characters of molten lead. *Cook.*

As to the speeches, whether reported verbatim or only for substance of thought, the poetic form and dress being given with the writer's own hand, with free allowance for his own literary taste and skill in setting forth the differing views, it may be remarked: 1. The tone of high and well-sustained literary culture and finish, coupled with poetic genius, forbids the supposition of an off-hand discussion reported verbatim. 2. The literary style is *one* and not many, indicating the work of one mind. If each one of the six speakers had been precisely reported, it is simply impossible that there should not have been more diversity in literary merit and finish than is apparent here. *H. C.*

Relative Position and Teaching of the Book.

The history of Job is one among a great body of signal facts illustrative of God's ways with men and of His plan of grace. The Book of Job is one of a long series of inspired writings through which it has pleased God to make known His will and to reveal Himself. The books of Moses contain God's covenant with Israel as a nation. The historical books record His dealings with the people as such. The books of the prophets make known His will to Israel and concerning Israel as the people of God. These set forth the general principles and methods of the Divine administration. The promises and threatenings concern the entire body of the people or some considerable section of them, and individuals share the fortunes of the mass. But Job stands alone and by himself. He is dealt with as an individual, not as one of a certain race or nation, and particularly not as one of the chosen seed or covenant people, to which he does not even belong. In his history we see the righteousness of God in its relations not to Israel, but to an individual man. The righteousness of God in its more general and

obvious manifestations is assumed as the starting-point. This is taken for granted as well understood and agreed upon between Job and his friends at the outset. But a crisis occurs in Job's spiritual history in which the opinions that they have hitherto entertained are not adequate. A state of affairs arises at variance with their defective notions of the Divine righteousness. In the struggle that ensues, new light is imparted, and more accurate conceptions are reached. God's righteousness had been inadequately apprehended in two respects, belonging severally to the two poles of Old Testament truth or the two phases of Old Testament instruction, the Law and the Gospel. The question that agitates the soul of Job is that of his personal relation to God. Is he the object of the Divine displeasure, or will God accomplish his salvation? But in fact he knew neither the extent of the Divine displeasure nor the greatness of God's salvation. The righteousness of God condemned more in him than he suspected; while that which he looked upon as a sentence of condemnation was a measure of God's grace. W. H. G.

The Great Solved Problem of the Book, and How it was Solved.

It is Job himself, the man Job, with his bewilderment of doubt, his utter honesty with himself and the world, his outreaching faith, his loyalty through all darkness and mystery to what is godlike, *who is the solution of the Job-problem*, far more truly than Job's words, or the words of Elihu, or the august address from the whirlwind. How God deals with men, and how men may interpret His dealings; why God sees fit to afflict the righteous; these are indeed important questions, and not to be ignored; but more vital still is the question what Job *is*, becomes, achieves, in the fiery trial of God's unexplained visitation. In the answer to that personal question lies the supreme answer to all the rest. It is not a mere author that we find here, but a man. And as we trace the progress of Job's soul, step by step, revealed to us through his own words and through the attacks of his friends, we shall be brought to a contemplation of greatness in life and character such as, for sublimity, it will be hard to parallel in literature, however highly we may value the divinest creations of an Æschylus or a Milton. Thus, in the person and spiritual history of Job, we are brought back to the narrative basis which, so long as we consider only the discourses of the poem, we are in danger of ignor-

ing. Under these discourses we are to trace not the building of a system, but the progress of a character, tried, developed, victorious; for they reveal how the patriarch works out, or perhaps we may better say embodies, the solution of a great problem.

What, then, *is* the problem, if such is its solution? We need not look far for the answer to this question. The problem, propounded by Satan at the outset, and tested by permission of Jehovah, is, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" This is, of course, the sneer of utter selfishness against all that is loyal and disinterested; it asks, in effect, Is there such a thing as whole-souled, self-forgetting service of God, just for His sake and for righteousness' sake? And Job's life, as it is traced in the glowing, indignant, faith-inspired words of his complaint, is the triumphant answer. Job *does* fear God for naught—that is, his integrity is no vulgar barter for wages, as Satan supposes, but deeply founded in the truth of things, so deeply that he takes leave of friends, of family, of life; nay, of God Himself, as he has hitherto regarded God, in order to be true. And if Job, a man like ourselves, has wrought out the answer, then the answer exists in humanity. There is such a thing as disinterested piety, and it contains whole worlds of faith and insight. Or, to gather the history before us into a sentence: *There is a service of God which is not work for reward: it is a heart-loyalty, a hunger after God's presence, which survives loss and chastisement; which in spite of contradictory seeming cleaves to what is godlike as the needle seeks the pole; and which reaches up out of the darkness and hardness of this life to the light and love beyond.* This, if we must chill it down from the glow of its personal and poetic utterance to a generalization, is what the Book of Job stands for. But of this answer, as of the problem, the hero is as little aware as the rest. Wrought out in darkness and anguish, it is known only to those celestial spectators who rejoice, and to that scoffing spirit who is discomfited by it. For the answer is not put in words, nor made a didactic issue; it is *lived*. J. F. G.

The Main Question Discussed by Job and his Friends; and its Twofold Answer in the Discourses of Elihu and of Jehovah.

It is virtually the one question of life which meets us at every turn, which out of the pale of revelation is enveloped in impenetrable obscurity, and which, even with the light shed upon it by the promises of the Gospel, is by no

means devoid of profound mystery—namely, the unequal distribution of suffering in the world, and the blindness with which the righteous rather than the wicked appear to be selected as its victims. *Leathes*.—The question discussed in the Book of Job is one of the most difficult in theological science. Why does not a just God treat men in the present life according to their character? Why does vice so often go unpunished? Job's friends cut the knot by denying the fact. To uphold their side of the question, they misrepresented the general experience of man. Job felt the difficulty, but could not solve it. He was fully conscious of his own integrity, and he could not see why he was visited with such unparalleled sufferings. To the depth of emotion consequent on the discussion of this theological question, the whole compass of Greek poetry, perhaps, supplies no parallel. B. B. E.

Among the mysteries of God's providence there is perhaps no mystery greater than the law by which suffering is meted out in the world. It is not a mystery that sin should bring forth sorrow; it is not a mystery that pain, disease, and death should be the fruit of man's fall. The really difficult problem is not the problem of suffering in the abstract; it is the problem of the meting out of suffering on any theory; it is the problem why the innocent are called upon to suffer while the guilty too often escape; it is the problem why the purest, simplest of our race should drain the cup of sorrow, while the ungodly have more than their hearts desire, and have neither affliction in their life nor pain in their death. This is the problem which comes before us in that grandest of poems, which has ever sounded the deeps of the human heart, the poem of Job. We have in this book the problem worked out, and three answers given. First is the answer of the three friends who come to condole with Job in his affliction. One after another they repeat the same commonplaces of their creed—God is just, and therefore God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. If a man suffers, he suffers because he deserves it. The sufferer himself indignantly repudiates this belief. It is of no use to tell him he has been a hypocrite, an evil-doer; he denies the accusation; he will be true to God and to the method of His justice so far as he knows it, but he must be true to his conscience; he will not say, "I am guilty," when he knows he is innocent. But there is another theory of suffering which approaches more nearly to the truth, which is also given in the Book of Job. Elihu declares that God's purpose in chastisement is

the purification of His servant. Here certainly is a step in advance. To see a purpose of love in affliction is to turn it into a blessing. But the mystery of suffering is not fully explained even when this purifying power is assigned to it. There is a suffering which is not even for the salvation or purification of the individual soul, but for the glory of God. If we look at the prelude of the book, we learn this lesson. Satan insinuates that the piety of Job is a selfish piety. His challenge strikes at the nature of God Himself. And God accepts the challenge. This is the key to the enigma, though Job knew nothing of it. Surely no more noble part can be assigned to any man than to be the champion of God. Men may mock at the Gospel and its promises; they may charge the followers of the Crucified with selfish aims and sordid motives; but one saint, who knows that the glory of God is in his hands, shall answer the sneer. His submission, self-sacrifice, and love shall compel the world to confess that God is love, and that man loves God for Himself. *Perowne*.

The first half of the correct, positive solution of the problem, consisting in the presentation of the chastening and purifying aim of unmerited suffering (that is, sufferings not direct punishments for specific sins), is contributed by the *discourses of Elihu*. They seek, in a way which accords with Prov. 3:11, to exhibit the sufferings of the righteous man as chastisements and means of purification, having "the sin of the righteous man indeed for their ground, but having for their motive not God's wrath, but His love, aiming to refine and to advance the sufferer." (*Dillmann*.) The other half of the positive solution of the problem, consisting in the exhibition of the suffering of the righteous as ordained to prove them and to test their innocence, finds expression in the *discourses of Jehovah*, in His judicial arbitration between the contending parties, as well as in His actual restoration of Job's former prosperity. According to this, the profoundest solution, in which the whole scope of the book culminates, and finds its definitive authoritative expression, the afflictions of the innocent are "means of proving and testing, which, like chastisements, find their motive in the love of God. Their object is not, however, the purging away of the sin which may still cling to the righteous man, but, on the contrary, the manifestation and testing of his righteousness." (*Delitzsch*.) A. B. D.

The hardest, the severest, the last lesson which man has to learn upon this earth, is submission to the will of God. It is the hardest lesson, because to our blinded eyesight it often

seems a cruel will. It is a severe lesson, because it can be only taught by the blighting of much that had been most dear. It is the last lesson, because when a man has learned that, he is fit to be transplanted from a world of wilfulness to a world in which one will alone is loved, and only one is done. All that saintly experience ever had to teach resolves itself into this, the lesson how to say affectionately, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Slowly and stubbornly our hearts acquiesce in that. The holiest, so far as he has mastered the lesson, will acknowledge that many a sore and angry feeling against his God had to be subdued, many a dream of earthly brightness broken, and many a burning throb stilled in a proud, resentful heart, before he was willing to suffer God to be sovereign in His own world, and do with him and his as seemed to Him best. The earliest record that we have of this struggle in the human bosom is found in the Book of Job. It is the most ancient statement we have of the perplexities and miseries of life, so graphic, so true to nature, that it proclaims at once that *what we are reading is drawn from life*. What is the Book of Job but the record of an earnest soul's perplexities? What falls from Job's lips is the musing of a man half-stunned, half-surprised, looking out upon the darkness of life, and asking sorrowfully why are these things so? F. W. R.—There are, from his point of view, two conflicting elements: the theory of retribution, which seems to him inseparable from faith in the justice of God, and the unwavering testimony of his conscience, which, in his present circumstances, protests against this theory; hence his perplexity. The conflict within him is not between good and evil, but between good and good—between the justice of God affirmed by his conscience, and his relative innocence, no less firmly attested by that inner and sacred voice; so much so, that he feels himself driven logically either to give the lie to his conscience, if he would still uphold the justice of God, or deny God, if he would maintain the truth of his conscience. Terrible position! which constitutes precisely the climax of the trial of which he is unconsciously the subject. *Godet.*

Job's experience touches our deepest life at many a point. Every one is called to suffer and be strong, every one meets with mysteries on the right hand and on the left, confusing and bewildering, whose solution must be left to the future. The struggle of Job is repeated over and over again in the experience of earnest souls, though the form and conditions of it are ever changing. *Gilbert.*

AGE AND PLACE.

That the Book of Job is anterior to the exodus from Egypt is evident from the fact that we find in it no allusion of any sort to the events of the bondage in Egypt or to the deliverance—events which would have furnished most striking illustrations of the great subjects discussed in the book. Neither is there any allusion to or use made of the law given by Moses—the priesthood, sacrificial ritual, usages, institutions or Sabbaths of the Mosaic law, which must in some form have been referred to by a man of Job's piety living in the vicinity of Egypt and of the Israelites, if the events recorded in Job had occurred after the time of Moses. It is hardly conceivable that if these discussions of the great questions of Providence and sin and retribution had occurred after the revelation to Moses and the institutions of religion appointed under that revelation, the mind of such men could have utterly ignored his existence.

In the second place, the positive evidence is equally clear to the point that this record in Job is of matters anterior to Moses. For all allusions in the book to the manners and customs of the times—domestic, social, or political—are found to fit in exactly with the patriarchal age, and can fit in only in the patriarchal age. The historical allusions are taken from patriarchal times. The style of life in which Job lived is plainly patriarchal. His riches, like Abraham's, are rated by the numbers of his cattle and servants; and that, too, the same sorts of cattle, with the very same omission of horses and mules, as in Abraham's case. Job speaks of himself as "going out to the gate through the city" and receiving the respect of every class, just as Lot sat in the gate. Mention is made of the natural productions and arts of Egypt, just such as we have shown in previous disclosures they did, existed there. Allusion also is made to revolutions, and the rising and falling of kingdoms, just such as we have shown occurred, both on the Nile and the Euphrates, in the patriarchal era. The entire theology of the book is the theology of Abraham; and the mode of worship—the father acting as priest of the family, without a separate order of priesthood, or any tabernacle—as in the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, fixes the era of the scenes described. Besides, the allusions to the various forms of idolatry are in accord with the theory of a patriarchal state. The only form of idolatry mentioned is the worship of the sun—Sabeism. And what confirms all is the fact that Job lived one hundred and forty years after his restoration to property—probably two hun-

dred years in all—which shows that he must have lived in the earlier part of the patriarchal age, before human life was shortened to three-score years and ten or fourscore years. S. R.

The ablest critics of all schools—Ewald, Renan, Hahn, Schlottmann and Delitzsch—are unanimous in bearing testimony to the fact that in all the descriptions of manners and customs, domestic, social, and political, and even in the casual illustrations, the genuine coloring of the age of Job is faithfully observed; that the numerous allusions to historical events refer exclusively to patriarchal times; that there is a complete, and in their opinion an intentional and most skilful avoidance of occurrences, such as must have been well known to a later writer. From the beginning to the end of the book no single reference is made to the Mosaic law; the very word law (Thorah), so common in every other book, more especially in those of the age, to which modern critics refer this work, occurs only once (22 : 22), and then not in the special signification of a received code; the peculiar institutions of Israel, and the cardinal events of the national history after the Exodus, are wholly unnoticed. It should be borne in mind that no ancient writer ever succeeded in reproducing the manners of a past age, or in avoiding allusion to those of his own. The age of any ancient writer can be positively determined when we have a full and exact knowledge of the institutions and customs which he describes. All critics concur in extolling the fresh, antique simplicity of manners, the genuine air, the wild, free, vigorous life of the desert; and admit the contrast between the manners, thoughts, and feelings described in this book and those of the Israelites during the monarchical period. To this it must be added that the effect of reality is produced by a number of internal indications which can scarcely be accounted for, save by a faithful adherence to objective truth. In all the characters there is a thorough consistency, each agent in the transaction has peculiarities of thought and feeling, which give him a distinct and vivid personality; this is more especially the case with Job himself, whose character is not merely drawn in broad outlines, but, like that of David and others, whose history is given with most detail in Scripture, is developed under a variety of most trying circumstances, presenting under each change new aspects, but ever retaining its peculiar and most living individuality. Even the language and illustrations of the several speakers have distinctive characteristics. The incidents, moreover, which in a fiction would probably have

been noted in a vague and general manner, are narrated with minuteness and an accurate observance of local and temporary conditions. The most refined art could scarcely produce this result; it is rarely attempted, still more rarely, if ever, attained in the most artificial ages; it was never dreamed of by ancient writers, and must be regarded in this case as a strong instance of the undesigned coincidences, which sound criticism accepts as a sure attestation to the genuineness of a work. Cook.

The doctrines held by the three friends were probably the earliest human opinions on the great problem of suffering, and therefore indicate the very early age of the book. H. C.

A VERITABLE HISTORY.

The celebrated patriarch whose history is recorded in the following book has been represented by some critics as imaginary, and his book as a fictitious dramatic composition. But he was evidently considered as real by the Prophet Ezekiel, who ranks Noah, Daniel, and Job together, as powerful intercessors with God: the first for his family, the second for the wise men of Babylon, and the third for his friends (14 : 14). And the Apostle James celebrates the exemplary "patience of Job" (5 : 11). And the book itself, the early admission of which into the sacred canon is strongly in favor of its veracity, describes the residence of Job and his friends with all the geographical precision of true history. Hales.—That the Book of Job was written as a literal relation of actual events is evident from the style of the author, from his mode of introducing the subject, and also from the circumstantial detail of habitation, kindred, and condition, as well as from the names of the persons therein mentioned, which correspond with other accounts of the age and country in which Job is generally supposed to have existed. Gray.—It is related not as a parable, but as a history, instructive throughout, as all the Bible histories are, but still an actual, veritable occurrence. And Job is spoken of in other parts of Scripture as a real person, and in connection with other real persons like Noah and Daniel, and the events of his life are referred to in a manner which implies that they had actually occurred. We can have no doubt, therefore, that, with all the poetic embellishment of the narrative, Job did actually live, and the history took place substantially as it is here related. W. H. G.

Surely the designations "Temanite, Shuhite, Naamathite" might have been spared, unless

they were intended to indicate that these persons really had "a local habitation and a name." Mention is made, too, of the "Sabeans," the "Chaldeans," and the "Wilderness." Now, the two former surely need not have been mentioned, as the term "robbers" would much better have suited the context had the subject been merely parabolic; but the introduction of the latter in conjunction with the names of those people gives the whole not more the air of historical narration than it does of geographical accuracy. Then the feasting of the sons of Job, each in his day—that is, probably, during the period of a week, these sons being seven in number; Job's sending for and admonishing them; his offering up a sacrifice at the same time for each of them, seems overdone and unnecessary, if all that was wanting was merely to illustrate the doctrine that patient faith in God was a virtue acceptable to Him. For here we are led into particulars which were not only not Jewish, and which never could have been countenanced by that nation, much less have recommended any doctrine, but which had nothing whatever to do with the lesson principally taught in the book; and, what is most remarkable, which appear to have been strictly historical truths as regards the customs of the time at which the book appears to have been written. These and many other points of the like nature are circumstances which we expect to find in a historical narrative, but not in a parable or allegory, where they would be superfluous and obstructive. *Kitto*.—Allegories and parables do not descend to such details of birth, location, children and friends, as we find here. But what should be decisive with those who accept the inspiration of the Scriptures is the fact that the Prophet Ezekiel names Noah, Job, and Daniel together as men powerful with God, and he would hardly mention a fictitious character thus in connection with two historic characters. "Ye have heard," says the Apostle James, "of the patience of Job." An apostle would hardly cite a fictitious character when exhorting Christians to "take the prophets for an example of patience and suffering affliction." In short, it will be found that no theory of the age of this book or its character and scope so well fits in with all the facts, as that which accepts it as the history of a real personage living at some period between Abraham and Moses in the land of Uz, a country lying east of Canaan and toward the Euphrates. S. R.

Considerations showing Job to have been a veritable historic personage: 1. The points of the whole case are given with very great mi-

nutness, as those of a real history. 2. The agencies which brought upon him his affliction and all the facts set forth as history correspond with the well-known circumstances of that country and age. 3. Subsequent sacred writers speak of Job as a real, not a fictitious person. In Ezekiel (14: 14-20), the words are those of Jehovah Himself—"Though these three men" (all equally assumed to be real men), "Noah, Daniel, and Job," etc. These men are adduced as notable examples of prevailing prayer in behalf of others. This assumes that they were real, not fictitious men. We must make the same inference from the words of James (5: 11): "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." H. C. —To argue and illustrate the mercy of the Lord from His asserted dealings with a fictitious character would seem well-nigh an approach to what we call blasphemy. Assuredly so in a case like this, where the writer is dealing with the plainest prose of deepest heart experience. B.—No argument in favor of regarding the story of Job as fiction can be drawn from the New Testament parables, for these differ widely from the apparent facts in the history of Job. The points made in the parables do not purport to be real history. They are simply supposed cases, set forth with the avowed purpose of illustrating great truths pertaining to the kingdom of God.

As to the writer's knowledge of what transpired at the coming of Satan among "the sons of God," and the ensuing conversation between Jehovah and Satan, those who admit inspiration at all in the writing of Scripture will have not the least difficulty in assuming inspiration here. H. C.—And certainly the reported speeches which comprise the book suggest no more or greater difficulty. In truth, the choice of the intelligent inquirer, limited as it is to inspiration, lies between an inspired myth or fiction and an inspired account of a real human history and experience. Sound common sense as well as the analogy of all revelation would seem to demand the restful acceptance of the latter alternative.

[We cite, finally, a passage that seems to contain in itself an invincible argument in support of the position here taken, though it stands in a different connection of thought upon the writer's pages. It is, moreover, a just and noble summary of the book. B.]

If ever a book revealed a man, if ever through the indignant thrusts of controversy were heard the beatings of a warm human heart, it is in

this story of the patriarch of Uz. Studied as an argument cunningly put together by a skilled reasoner, the Book of Job is beset with difficulties well-nigh insurmountable. Studied as the utterance of a man like ourselves, who speaks out in the natural style what is in him, it is the clear and unambiguous voice of humanity, which finds echo in all the world. Time and space are annihilated, and the unreal vagaries of speculation seem outlived, as this echo of our own deep consciousness comes floating to us across the centuries. It came glowing from a large human heart, from the furnace of universal human affliction; and it is adapted to reach every soul that has thought and suffered. . . . Its study will indeed reveal great problems, whose filaments stretch out through the world of theological and philosophical inquiry; it will not fail to deepen our sense of the marvellous literary art which has presided alike over word and plan; but, what is of more intimate concern to us, it will disclose to our gaze in clearer outlines one of the great of the earth, a man of fears and doubts like ourselves, rising up against his doom, which is humanity's doom, and conquering his way to hope and peace. The man Job is one of the guiding figures of the ages, a world's hero; whose words, the record of a great conflict and victory, we cannot afford to leave cloistered among the learned few. J. F. G.

CANONICITY OF THE BOOK.

The Book of Job is among those portions of Holy Scripture of whose canonicity there has never been any doubt. It is named in the canon of Melito, at the end of the *Harlographa*, and immediately before the prophecy of Isaiah. Origen places it among the prophets, between Ezekiel and Esther; and Epiphanius (A. D. 400), between Joshua and Judges. Jerome, following the Septuagint, assigns it the place that it holds in our English Bibles. In many of the Hebrew Bibles among the Germans its place is between the Proverbs and the Canticles; and in the Spanish mss. and the Masora, and also in the Talmud, it stands between the Psalms and Proverbs. Among the moderns, while all the canons contain this book, there is no general agreement in respect to its relative position. *Curry*.

All authorities which define the Hebrew canon certify that Job belongs in it. *How came it there?* No books were ever admitted into that canon except those written by men accredited among the Hebrew people as "prophets." The Jewish nation in all ages (Josephus being

witness) held this doctrine tenaciously, and were ready to seal it with their blood, that holy men of God had given them certain writings, and that not a written word might be admitted into the sacred collection except those which came certainly and undeniably from the pen and the tongues of these prophets of God. The author of Job, therefore, must have been a known, accredited prophet of God. H. C.

AUTHORSHIP.

As to the authorship of the book, nothing is known with certainty. Some have attributed it to Job himself; some to Elihu; others to some unknown Arabic author, under the impression that the book has been translated into Hebrew. But no competent Hebrew scholar can doubt that the poem is an original Hebrew work. Others, following the Jewish tradition, have attributed the book to Moses, while some have discovered in the philosophic cast of the poem the hand of Solomon. Both the authorship and the era must ever remain involved in doubt. A. B. D.

One thing seems now clear to all critics: it is that we are not to look for the author of the Book of Job outside the Jewish people. This is proved by the classical Hebrew in which it is written, and by the purely Jewish name of *Jehovah*, which is used in the historical parts, in the prologue and epilogue, and in the connecting narratives in the body of the book; while in the discourses of the friends and of Elihu, God is designated by the names *El Shaddai*, and *Eloah*, which are equally in use among other Semitic nations. *Godet*.

Taking all the ascertained facts into consideration, it may be confidently maintained that whether the writer of the book were a Palestinian Hebrew or not, he must have lived at a time and under circumstances which either kept him in ignorance of the institutions peculiar to Mosaism, or made him to a most remarkable extent independent of their influence. The hypothesis which, on the whole, seems least encumbered with difficulties, is that the work was written in the country of Job, probably by one of his descendants, but certainly after a considerable interval of time, the patriarch being evidently represented as belonging to another age, his own life extending to the fourth generation (42: 16) of children born after his deliverance. *Cook*.

ITS INCULCATED TRUTHS.

1. The creation of the world by one Supreme Being. This is the first great principle of natu-

ral religion ; it is laid down throughout the whole book as an incontestable truth, but is particularly illustrated in the speech of Jehovah Himself. 2. The government of the world by the providence of God. 3. The corruption of man by nature. 4. The necessity of an atonement, prefigured in sacrifices, to turn away the Divine anger, and to render the Almighty favorable ; also, the intercession and mediation of a righteous person on behalf of the guilty. 5. The certainty of a future resurrection and retribution. *E. Copley.*

Among all writings, inspired or uninspired, the Book of Job stands pre-eminent for its lofty representations of the pure moral personality, the holiness, the unchallengeable justice, the wisdom, the omnipotence, the absolute sovereignty of God. In the splendor of its theism it is unsurpassed. *T. Lewis.*

The book teaches us to recognize *a fourfold purpose in human suffering*. 1. There is a *penal suffering* with which God visits the ungodly. 2. There is a *Divine chastisement* imposed upon all men, which is necessarily due to the natural sinfulness of human nature. 3. There is also a special *testing and purifying* of the righteous imposed upon them by the love of God, for the purpose of delivering them from some secret pride, of leading them to humble and penitent self-knowledge, and of thus insuring to them the Divine favor. This is the doctrine which Elihu brings forward. And, finally, 4. There is a suffering which is designed to *manifest the triumph of faith* and the fidelity of the righteous. This it is which was the immediate object of Job's afflictions, as already alluded to in the *prologue*, and evidenced to all in the *epilogue*. Proof is furnished in the case of Job that the faith of even a true servant of God may be sorely shaken ; nay, that he may be brought to the very verge of despair, by the temptation of suffering ; that nevertheless he cannot, even in the midst of rebellion against God, entirely give Him up ; and, finally, that his fidelity stands the test, though he does not come through the trial without abundant cause for humiliation. Such sufferings are akin to those endured as *testimony*, to sufferings entailed by confession of the truth, and zeal for the house of God, as spoken of in many of the Psalms and by Jeremiah. While the Book of Job offers a key to the afflictions of the righteous, it at the same time furnishes reasons for believing in the *righteous providence of God*, from the consideration of His character and His dominion over nature. From *the character of God*—in the profound speech of Elihu (34 : 10 sqq.), the fundamental

thought of which is : God, by reason of His *power* over the world, can never be unjust. For the world is not a thing alien to Him, a thing intrusted to Him by another, but His own possession, and all life therein is derived from His breath. God cannot be unjust to that which He Himself called into existence and maintains therein. It is because He is the Creator and Governor of the world that He is also the only source of right therein. He so directs the lot of individuals and nations that right is at last made manifest. This oneness of power and righteousness in God is also brought forward in the second address of the Lord to Job (chap. 40), and the subject applied to man, to show that if his righteousness is to be vindicated at the expense of the Divine righteousness he ought also to be possessed of Divine power. But Divine providence also may be inferred from God's *dominion over nature*. This proposition is already prepared for in chap. 38, the idea being there carried out that man, though incapable of becoming possessed of the Divine wisdom itself—of the thought according to which the world is ordered—is yet able to recognize its traces in the whole economy of nature, and may therefore, with regard to the Divine appointment of human life, resign himself to and fall back on the fear of God. This point of view is especially maintained by Elihu. God approaches man in nature as an incomparable teacher (36 : 22), everywhere manifesting to him His wisdom and power. O.

As for the *scope or use of this book* :

First. It aims at our *instruction*, and that in divers things : 1. It instructs us *how to handle a cross* ; how to behave ourselves when we are in a conflict, whether outward or inward ; what the postures of the spiritual war are, and with what patience we ought to bear the hand of God and His dealings with us. 2. God would have us learn that *afflictions come not by chance*—that they are all ordered by Providence, in the matter, in the manner, and in the measure. 3. Another thing we are to learn from this book is this : the *sovereignty of God*—that He hath power over us, over our estates, our bodies, our families and our spirits ; that He may use us as He pleases, and we must be quiet under His hand ; when He cometh and will take from us all our comforts, we must give all glory to Him. This book is written for this especially, to teach us the sovereignty of God and the submission of the creature. 4. It teaches us that God doth sometimes afflict His children out of prerogative ; that though there be no sin in them, which He makes the occasion of afflicting them,

yet for the exercise of His grace in them, for the trial of their graces and to set them up for patterns to the world, God may and doth afflict them. *Though no man be without sin, yet the afflictions of many are not for their sins.* 5. There is this general instruction which God would have us learn out of this book—that the most justly possessed and best-secured estate in outward things is uncertain—that is, there is no trusting to any creature comforts. 6. God would show His people the *strength and stability of faith*. How unconquerable it is—what a kind of omnipotency there is in grace! God would have all the world take notice of this in the Book of Job, that a godly person is in vain assaulted by friends or enemies, by men or devils, by wants or wounds; though he be even benighted in his spirit, though God Himself take away the light of His countenance from him, yet God would have us learn and know that over all these a true believer is more than conqueror. For here is one of the greatest battles fought that ever was between man and man, between man and hell; yea, between God and man; yet Job went away with the victory. True, grace is often assaulted; it never was or never shall be overthrown. 7. This also we may learn—that God never leaves or forsakes His totally or finally. 8. Lastly, the book teaches us that the judgments of God are often secret, but they are never unjust; that though the creature be unable to give a reason of them, yet there is an infinite reason for them. These are the general uses from the general scope and intendment of the book by way of instruction.

Secondly. This book serves to *convince and reprove*: 1. That slander of worldly men and of Satan, who say that the people of God serve Him for their own end. 2. To convince and reprove all those who judge of the spiritual estate of those that are under the hand of God in sore afflictions by some unbecoming and rash speeches which may fall from them in the time of these their conflicts, when troubles and sufferings are upon them. 3. To convince and confute those who judge of men's spiritual estates by God's dealing with them in their outward estates. 4. To convince and confute that cursed opinion that a man may fall finally and totally away from grace and from the favor of God. God hath showed by this history that such an opinion is a lie. Certainly God would have all the world know that free grace will uphold His forever. 5. To convince all those of pride and extreme presumption who think to find out and

to trace the secrets of God's counsels, the secrets of God's eternal decrees, the secrets of all His works of providence; whereas God sheweth them in this book that they are not able to find out or comprehend His ordinary works; they are not able to comprehend the works of creation; how are they able then to find out the counsels of God in His decrees and purposes and judgments?

Thirdly. There is much for *consolation*: 1. That all things do work for the good of those that love God. 2. That no temptation shall ever take hold of us but such as God will either make us able to have, or make a way of escape out of it. We can be in no condition cast so low but the hand of God can reach us, find us, send in deliverance and raise us up again. *Caryl.*

In the Revision many of the obscurities of the Authorized Version are removed. There is probably no part of the Scriptures in which so much has been gained. Yet it must be conceded that it does not seem possible that translation, however accurate and skilful, should accomplish everything that might be desired. This probably arises in some measure from the nature of the composition. It records the complaints and outcries of a sufferer, the flow of whose thought and feeling is constantly interrupted by the depth of his emotion. His passionate utterance is suddenly checked by the very power of his grief, and after moments of silence he bursts out afresh in words which have no direct connection with the language preceding. *De Witt.*

Plan or Structure of the Book.

- I. Introductory Narrative in prose. Chaps. 1, 2.
- II. The Poem. Chaps. 3–42 : 6.
 1. Job's Complaint. Chap. 3.
 2. The Debate, in three cycles.
 - (1) First cycle. Chaps. 4–14.
 - (2) Second cycle. Chaps. 15–21.
 - (3) Third cycle. Chaps. 22–26.
 3. Job's Second Complaint. Chaps. 27–31.
 4. Elihu's Speech, introduced by a short prose account of him. Chaps. 32–37.
 5. The Lord's Voice, and Job's Submission. Chaps. 38–42 : 6.
- III. Concluding Narrative, in prose. Chap. 42 : 7–17. *D. F.*

THE BOOK OF JOB.

CHAPTER I.

1 THERE was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job ; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and
2 turned away from evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.
3 His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-
4 asses, and a very great household ; so that this man was the greatest of all the children
5 of the east. And his sons went and held a feast in the house of each one upon his day ; and they sent and called for their three sisters
6 to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all : for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and renounced God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.
7 Now it came to pass on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, that Satan came also among
8 them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou ? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down
9 in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job ? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and
10 turneth away from evil. Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought ? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side ? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his
11 substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face.

12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power ; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.
13 And it fell on a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in
14 their eldest brother's house, that there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside
15 them : and the Sabeans fell *upon them*, and took them away ; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword ; and I
16 only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them ; and I only
17 am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have taken them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword ; and I only am escaped
18 alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house :
19 and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead ; and I only am es-
20 caped alone to tell thee. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and wor-
21 shipped ; and he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither : the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the
22 LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God with foolishness.

1-3. THE first three verses describe the position of Job, his country, name, character, family, and possessions.

1. Uz. A district peopled by the descendants of Uz. Three patriarchs bear this name : a son of Aram (Gen. 10 : 23) ; a son of Nahor,

Abraham's brother (Gen. 22 : 21) ; and a grandson of Seir, the Horite (Gen. 36 : 28). The second of these probably gave the name to this country : the Chaldeans, Buzites, and indeed all the persons and tribes mentioned in the Book of Job, belong to the same race ; being either collateral or direct descendants from Abraham, and for the most part retaining the old patriarchal habits and traditions. The district, as generally identified, lay to the northeast of Idumæa, and appears to have been nearly co-extensive with Bathanyeh, or East Hauran, once a rich and fertile country. This is now generally regarded as the true home of Job. *Cook.*

3. Job dwelt not in tents, but in a house, not in camps, but in a town, having a fixed and not a movable residence, though his shepherds doubtless went out afar with his flocks. This is the state of life depicted as that led by the elder branches of Abraham's family at Haran, the state of life which that great father of the faithful quitted, relapsing into a more simple pastoral life, to meet the alteration of his circumstances when *he* was required to go into a strange country, "not knowing whither he went." This of course affords a corroboration to the opinion that Job not only belonged to this state of life, but to this region. He belonged to that condition which fluctuated between that of the wandering shepherd and that of the settled inhabitant of towns and cultivator of the ground ; and this mixed condition of life, which is still to be witnessed in some parts of western Asia, sufficiently accounts for the diversified character of the allusions and pictures which the book contains—to the pastoral life and the scenes and products of the wilderness ; to the scenes and circumstances of agriculture ; and to the arts and sciences of settled life and advancing civilization. *Kitto.*

4. In this beautiful picture of family affection and of domestic enjoyments sanctified by piety, and in the sudden and total reverse which follows, the way is prepared for the lessons of this book. Of the particular occasion or occasions of these entertainments no intimation is given. A birthday festival is mentioned among very ancient usages (Gen. 40 : 20), and an annual family festival (1 Sam. 20 : 6, 29). Whatever was the occasion, they were held at the houses of the several sons in immediate succession till the circle was completed. *Conant.*

5. We apprehend this to mean that when the cycle of entertainments for the period over which the rotation ran had been completed, Job

customarily sent to invite them all to meet at his house, that they might be present at a solemn act of expiatory sacrifice—which, as the head of the family, it belonged to him in the absence of a priesthood to offer—by way of atonement generally for the sins of the season gone by, and specially for any forgetfulness of God into which they might have fallen in the course of their festivities. The subsequent institution under the law of Moses of a great annual day of atonement, understood to be expiatory for the transgressions of the congregation during the past year, helps to corroborate this interpretation as well as to illustrate the practice. This was the time, in the course of the rotation of visits, when all the family assembled in their father's house. It was *his* turn then to receive them, and his entertainment was such as became his position and character. *Kitto.*—The act of worship was the sacrifice. As was customary in the patriarchal age to which Job belonged, and even far down in the history of Israel, the father was priest of the family, and the sacrifice offered was the burnt-offering. This offering contained in it the germs which afterward expanded into the various distinct kinds of sacrifice. Job used it as a sacrifice of atonement A. B. D.

These verses serve a threefold use in the narrative : primarily, they furnish an historical occasion for the terrible calamities which follow ; incidentally, they contain a striking illustration of Job's tender and conscientious piety ; and finally, they present a pleasing picture of patriarchal family life in its affectionate harmony and joyousness. *Evans.*—Where now such piety was to be found, and such conscientious solicitude to keep his whole house free from sin, there might we expect, judging after the manner of men, that prosperity would abide permanently. This at least we might expect from the standpoint of theory, which regards the outward lot as an index of the moral worth ; which assumes piety and prosperity to be inseparable conceptions. But in heaven it was otherwise decreed. *Dillmann.*

6. This is a similitude taken from earthly courts, where advocates and accusers come together ; and it intimates unto us that as the good angels are ready to go forth at God's command for the good of men, so is Satan ever ready to further his malicious plots against them. Neither came he for good, as the angels did, but presents himself to get a commission to hurt Job. *Ainsworth.*

Satan. Foe to God and man, and the ac-

accuser of the brethren. The Greek version in this passage of Job, and in Zech. 3 : 1, renders "Satan" by a word signifying *the accuser*.

Parkhurst.—The grand spiritual "adversary" of mankind is here first introduced in Scripture under his proper name, "Satan," and under the character assigned to him from hence in the New Testament, of "walking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5 : 8, with allusion to Job 1 : 7 and 2 : 3), and as "the accuser of the brethren, who accused them before God night and day" (Rev. 12 : 10).

Hales.—The name "Satan," as denoting an enemy, frequently occurs in the Old Testament. See 2 Sam. 19 : 22 ; 1 Kings 5 : 4, where the word for "adversary" is in the original "Satan." It is extremely probable that the root *Satan* was introduced into the Hebrew and other Eastern languages to denote an adversary, from its having been the proper name of the great enemy of mankind. *Bishop Watson.*

Satan appears here with all the traits which characterize him in the Hebrew Monotheism, a high dignity of origin, a perfidious malignity, a spirit of considerable power, but strictly limited by the will of Him who entrusts him with it. *Godet.*—Though malignant and evil, this spirit is evidently counted among the angels by origin and nature. He comes among them as one of their order. Like them, he has to give an account of what he has observed. This representation is in accordance with other notices in the Bible. The existence of a malignant spirit, permitted to range the earth, tempting and calumniating God's rational creatures, is implied or asserted in all Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. It is to be observed that the final expulsion of this spirit from the higher region is represented in the New Testament as a result of the Saviour's coming. The mystery which hangs over such representations is common to all questions which concern the origin or continuance of moral evil. *Cook.*

The attentive reader of Scripture will not fail to remark that the statement of the existence, the moral propensities, and the agency of Satan is extended nearly through the whole of the sacred volume ; that its writers, in their portraiture of our great adversary, employ the same images and adhere to the same appellations throughout ; that a complete identity of character is exhibited, marked with the same features of force, cruelty, malignity, and fraud. He is everywhere depicted as alike the enemy of God and man ; who, having appeared as a serpent in the history of the fall, is recognized by Paul under the same character in express

allusion to that event, and afterward by John in the Apocalypse as "that old serpent the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." We have, therefore, just the same evidence of the real personality of Satan as of the Holy Spirit, and exactly of the same kind ; both are described by inspired persons ; to both, volitions, purposes, and personal characteristics are ascribed. A uniformity of representation, an identity of character, distinguished respectively by the most opposite moral qualities, equally pervade the statements of Scripture as to each to such a degree that, supposing the sacred writers to have designed to teach us the proper personality of Satan, it is not easy to conceive what other language they could have adopted. *R. Hall.*

There is a profound meaning in Satan's appearing here among the sons of God before the Lord. It is designed to express his subordination and subjection to Divine control. There is a superior restraint to which he is obliged to bow, a superior will that sets limits to his rage, and allows him even within these limits to act out his evil nature only for the sake of some Divine end which he is made to be instrumental in achieving. It is evil in the person of its arch-representative and head, subject to good and constrained to be its minister. It is Satan actually exhibited in the attitude of a servant of God, and made subservient to the discipline and training of His people. *W. H. G.*

It does not at all derogate from the credibility of Job's story in general to allow that this discourse between God and Satan is parabolical, an allegory designed to represent the malice of the devil against good men and the Divine check and restraint that malice is under. Only thus much further is intimated, that the affairs of this earth are very much the subject of the counsels of the unseen world. That world is dark to us, but we lie very open to it. *H.*—As to the incredibility of the conversation which is related to have taken place between the Almighty and Satan, it may be observed that this and the assemblage of the celestial intelligences before the throne of God should be considered as *prophetical* personifications, in accommodation to our limited faculties, which are abundantly authorized by God Himself in Holy Scripture, and are perfectly agreeable to the style wherein His prophets have been frequently commanded to deliver the most solemn and important truths. Thus the prophetic visions of Isaiah (chap. 6), of Ezekiel (chap. 1), of Paul (2 Cor. 12 : 2, 4), and of John (Rev. 4 : 1, 2) represent the proceedings of Providence in like reference

to our powers and modes of conception ; and the vision of Micaiah (1 Kings 22 : 19-23) and that of Zechariah (2 : 13 ; 3 : 1) supply cases precisely parallel in every respect. Farmer justly remarks on this subject that such "visions or parabolical representations convey instruction as *truly* and properly as if they were exact copies of outward objects." And indeed if the introduction of Satan be admitted as an argument against the truth of the history, it should lead us equally to reject the narrative of our Lord's temptation as an unfounded fiction. *Archbishop Magee.*

Such passages [as cited above] fall in with those very emphatic sayings of Christ concerning the joy in heaven over a repentant sinner, and the angels of the little ones. They teach us that earth is not lost out of the sight of heaven, that heaven is full of intense interest, longing, joy, and sorrow over the course of man. *Vincent.*—We shall fail to grasp the principles which underlie this dramatic picture, unless we are taught by it that the fortunes of men possess an absorbing interest for the inhabitants of heaven ; that moral problems are being wrought out here unlike any which have been solved there ; and that therefore they follow the fluctuation of our fate with a Divine curiosity and sympathy of which we have but a faint conception. For a few brief years man passes across the face of the earth, but above him there bends a broad heaven, not cold and hard and careless, but full of tender love and eager ministries ; and beneath him there yawns a hell crowded with hostile and malignant spirits, who would fain make him as selfish and miserable as themselves ; while above all and through all and in all God reigns and works, compelling even the disasters and defeats of the conflict to minister to the completeness and glory of the final triumph. *Cox.*

7. Going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down. One consequence to the spirit which has no belief in unselfishness is *the want of any centre of rest within itself*. The condition of Satan is thus described here. Incessant wandering, "going about," "seeking rest and finding none," is the view given of him in Scripture. There is the constant endeavor to find a fixed point, and inability to discover it ; and this may be the truth intended to be conveyed in that strange but significant narrative (Matt. 8 : 28), where the evil spirit is urged from place to place by the conquering power of good, till it is driven to beg for a refuge in the lowest and most grovelling forms of creation—to find itself, even here, too,

rejected, and cast forth naked and shelterless. This is most certain, that if the heart does not give quiet, no place in the universe can, and the personal head of evil has been for ages making the attempt to find that quiet in vain. *Ker.*—What doth Satan when he walks up and down the world? Doth he walk like an idle vagrant that hath nothing to do? Doth he walk merely to take the air or to take his pleasure, to see and be seen? No ; when Satan walks about the world, his walking is working ; he goeth about to tempt, to try and lay snares and baits to catch and captivate the souls of men. *Caryl.*

8-10. God, the Author, Judge, and Rewarder of good in the universe, declares before the heavenly assembly His satisfaction in the piety of Job. Satan, the representative of scepticism as to all virtue that has not passed through trial, does not give way to this judgment of God. God, instead of suppressing his insinuations, Himself draws forth the expression of them : "Hast thou considered My servant Job?" Satan, having no accusation to make against the outward conduct of Job, calls in question the purity of his motives : "Doth Job fear God for nought?" There is no great merit in faithfully serving a master who heaps benefits upon you, and pays you highly for your services. *Godet.*

8. My servant. No higher title of honor can be borne by man. This direct attestation of God to Job's character must be borne in mind throughout. *Cook.*—Both in the Old Testament and in the New, the dignity of the service of God is spoken of as paramount to all the other dignities of God's people? "Hast thou seen My servant Job?" God spoke with Moses face to face, but when God would boast of Moses, He does not speak of other privileges, but of this : "My servant, that is faithful in all My house." The great Apostle Paul puts his being a servant of God before his apostleship. "Paul, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." You find the same in Peter. He also says, "Peter, the servant of God and of Jesus Christ, and an apostle." When the great apostle speaks of James, he calls him "the Lord's brother ;" but when you find James writing his epistle, it is, "James, the servant of God and of Jesus Christ." The beloved disciple lay upon the bosom of God, but we do not find him speaking of this as his primal privilege ; it was, "John, the servant of Jesus Christ." The glory of the angelic host does not consist in this, that they excel in strength, that they stand upon the mount of God, but that they do His com-

mandments, and that they hearken unto the words of His mouth. There is no higher dignity in heaven, no higher privilege than to be the servant of God. When we come to the Revelation we read of a goodly multitude there, clothed in white robes. There are palms in their hands; they stand upon a sheet of glass; they harp with the harps of gold; but what is the privilege on which the Spirit of God lays emphasis? Not their robes, not their palms, not their harps, but this—"They serve God, day and night, in His temple." *Marcus Rainsford.*

A perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil. This statement of the Lord is very comprehensive. *He was perfect and upright.* Uprightness denotes honesty, straightforwardness, sincerity. He was sincere in his professions and honest in his practice. Uprightness, moreover, means conformity to the standard of right, and this both inwardly and outwardly. We read both of the upright in heart and of the man that is upright in his way. He was a man of integrity, therefore, both in spirit and in life—a man attentive to his obligations both to God and man, and who punctually discharged them. And, with all, he was perfect—perfect and upright, perfect in his uprightness. Perfect not, of course, in that sense in which, according to the uniform teaching of Scripture and the universal experience of men, perfection is unattainable in this life. Not that he was absolutely faultless, for there is no man that liveth and sinneth not. Job never claims spotless innocence. But he was perfect in the sense of completeness. There was a completeness in his piety, which compassed the whole round of obligation. He studied conformity to the rule of right in all things, at all times, under all circumstances. And the spring of this perfectness and uprightness, or this complete integrity, was that he feared God. He set the will of God before him as his rule, the glory of God as his end, the approbation of God as his highest reward. In this fear of God he walked all the day long. This was his grand motive, overpowering everything else. This impelled him to prompt and ready obedience to every Divine command. This made him steadfast in his uprightness, and led to his perfectness and completeness in it. It also led to the sedulous avoidance of its opposite, and thus completed the perfect square by the fourth side, which is the finishing stroke to this description of a well-regulated piety. He "turned away from evil;" he carefully shunned all sin, kept aloof from

everything that was wrong in heart, speech, and behavior. W. H. G.

Having a respect to all God's commandments, aiming at perfection, he did not dissemble in his profession of piety; his heart was sound, and his eye single. Sincerity is Gospel perfection; I know no religion without it. He was upright in his dealings both with God and man; was faithful to his promises, steady in his counsels, true to every trust reposed in him, and made conscience of all he said and did. The fear of God reigning in his heart was the principle that governed his whole conversation. That made him perfect and upright, inward and entire for God, universal and uniform in religion; that kept him close and constant to his duty. H.—Perfect holiness is the aim of the saints on earth, and is the reward of the saints in heaven. That which they aim at here is perfection—to be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, therefore they are called perfect. As God accepts the will for the deed, so He expresses the deed by the will. He esteems him to be a perfect man who strives after perfection; and He calls that person perfect who longs to have all his imperfections cured. We see, therefore, that Job might properly and fitly be described as "a perfect man," although it is clear from what ensues that many infirmities remained with him, and although he knew himself to be a sinner. *Kitto.*—Job was an eminent saint of God, though his line of descent was not counted from Abraham, and though he did not practise the multiplied rites of the Mosaic ceremonial. Whatever advantages there may be in an outward connection with the people of God or the visible Church, and whatever benefit may arise from outward attendance upon the services of religion—and certainly neither of these are to be undervalued when rightly understood and put in their proper place—that piety which has the approbation of God is something different from them and independent of them. W. H. G.

9. Satan, the accusing angel, fresh from his self-chosen task of roaming earth in search of sin, fronts God in heaven itself with calumnies against His purest creatures and detraction of His most tried saints. It is indeed a devilish suggestion, one too gross for human mind to invent, that all virtue is assumed, and piety itself but a selfish policy to cheat God. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" *Aglen.*—**For nought.** The central point of the whole narrative is in this word. No flaw is discoverable in Job's outer life; Satan, wiser than Job's friends, sees and owns his integrity; the only

possible objection touches the principle of his acts ; the question raised is whether his goodness was disinterested, springing from pure love, or merely prudential, and dependent upon the external conditions under which it had been developed. *Cook.*

The question says, in effect, why not be righteous, when righteousness pays so well ? But for another thing, the question reveals Satan's character, which, as the sequel shows, is in polar contrast to that of Job. A half-wondering, half-sneering, wholly selfish question, the question of one who, having no allegiance outside of self, has no ability to understand unselfishness ; it says in effect, Is there such a thing as disinterested integrity, goodness without thought of reward, possible in the world ? J. F. G.—It is an argument of a most malignant spirit, when a man's actions are fair, then to accuse his intentions. The devil had nothing to say against the actions of Job, but goes down into his heart and accuses his intentions. Malice misinterprets the fairest actions, but love puts the fairest interpretation it can upon foul actions. *Caryl.*

Satan puts his calumny, as many people have since done, into the form of a question. It is evident how he intended it to be answered. God has held up Job as a proof of His power to put true goodness into human nature, and the reply is that this seeming goodness is only self-interest. The man is religious because he makes a good thing out of it. The accuser has a belief in the philosophy of selfishness. It is a faith not uncommon in our day. There are some who seek a foundation for it in argument, and wish to prove that all virtue is merely self-interest largely and wisely interpreted, which is true in this respect, that goodness and self-interest will in the end coincide, but very false if it is meant that goodness has its origin in taking this end into account. *Ker.*—It was a great truth that Job did not fear God for nought, for godliness is great gain ; but it was a falsehood that he would not have feared God if he had not got this by it, as the event proved. Job's friends charged him with hypocrisy because he was greatly afflicted ; Satan, because he greatly prospered. It is no hard matter for those to calumniate that seek an occasion. It is not mercenary to look at the eternal recompense in our obedience ; but to aim at temporal advantages in our religion, and to make it subservient to that, is spiritual idolatry ; worshipping the creature more than the Creator is likely to end in a fatal apostasy ; men cannot long *serve God and mammon.* H.

The attacks of Satan are aimed primarily at the honor of God. And he knows perfectly well that the most telling blow he can inflict upon it is to deny that God is ever disinterestedly served and sincerely loved by any being whatsoever. The object of the trial of Job is precisely to demonstrate to him the contrary. *Godet.*

12. To make it plain that goodness may have other foundations and affliction other results, the Lord allows him to oppress for a season His righteous servant—to strip him of all—to bring him very low, but only to hold his person sacred. We learn from this that Satan has no independent power to distress mankind but as the Lord permits, for the trial of our faith and for the purification of our souls, and, therefore, for ultimate good if we but hold fast that which we have. It is only by our failure that the enemy gains any real power over us ; and this conviction, that whatever form our trials take they are essentially from the Lord, should teach us to receive them all as from His hand—a Father's hand. *Kitto.*—It is matter of wonder that God should give Satan such a permission as this, but He did it for His own glory, the honor of Job, the explanation of Providence, and the encouragement of His afflicted people in all ages ; to make a case which, being adjudged, might be a useful precedent. He suffered Job to be tried as He suffered Peter to be sifted ; but took care that *his faith should not fail*, and then the trial of it was *found unto praise and honor and glory* (1 Pet. 1 : 7). But it is matter of comfort that God has the devil *in a chain* (Rev. 20 : 1). He could not afflict Job without leave from God first asked and obtained, and then no further than he had leave : “ *Only upon himself put not forth thine hand ; meddle not with his body, but only with his estate.* ” It is a limited power that the devil has ; he has no power to debauch men but what they give him themselves, nor power to afflict men but what is *given him from above.* H.

It belongs to the magnificence of God's universal government that opposition and hostility, instead of tending to thwart or retard His plans, invariably contribute to further and promote them. Satan forms no exception. This arch-fiend, with the entire kingdom of evil which he instigates and controls, is absolutely powerless to prevent or to retard the execution of the least of God's designs. The decrees which he would frustrate embrace himself and all his hateful deeds, as agencies co-operating to their fulfilment. With all his hatred of God and spite against His people, he cannot emancipate him-

self from that sovereign control which binds him to God's service. In all his blasphemous designs he is, in spite of himself, doing the work of God. W. H. G.

All agencies, material and spiritual, are under the Divine control; and the one or the other may, with equal reason, be made the instrument of God's will. A process similar to the one here described, and with like results, is recorded in the memorable passage, Luke 22:31. The lessons to be drawn from the course of Providence, in the present state of imperfection and trial, are fully set forth in Rom. 8:18-25, 28. *Conant*.—God inaugurates and permits nothing which He cannot control; and the same thought is in the mind of Paul when he writes to the Corinthians, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way for your escape, that ye may be able to bear it." V.

Satan went forth. It is not the place makes us like to God, but there must be a likeness to God to make the place pleasant to us. When once the angels had corrupted their nature, the short stay they made in heaven did neither please them nor reform them. And when Satan appeared before God, among the angels, neither God's presence nor His speaking to him did anywise better him; he came a devil and he went away so, without any pleasure in the place or presence, but by the permission of God to wreak his malice on holy Job. *Charnock*.

17. This completes the ruin of Job's estate. The Sabeans had plundered the cattle of the homestead, the oxen and the asses; the fire had consumed the flocks of sheep in the pastures; and now the Chaldeans drive off the camels, which were at pasture in another and probably more distant quarter. And it is worthy of note that in all these cases the servants had lost their lives in defence of their master's property—the best proof that could be given that he had been a good master to them. *Kitto*.—These incursions from opposite quarters—Sabeans from the south, Chaldeans from the north—completed the destruction of Job's substance, but this draws from him no word of complaint; the "hedge" (v. 10) is broken down, the "blessing" gone, the "cattle" and "household" destroyed, but he remains steadfast. *Cook*.

18, 19. The next messenger came to declare to the patriarch that *all* his children were dead—rent from him at one fell swoop. In the midst of their feast, a "great wind from the wilderness came and smote the four corners of the

house," so that it fell, and destroyed all who were in it. This must have been a whirlwind, as it thus seemed to come from all points of the compass at once. Of the extreme violence and destructive effects of whirlwinds within the limited range in which they operate in eastern and especially tropical countries, many instances are reported. *Kitto*.—We had scarcely advanced two miles into the plain, when we were enclosed by a violent whirlwind, or what is called, at sea, the waterspout. A camel was lifted and thrown down at a considerable distance, and several of its ribs broken. Although I was not near its centre, it whirled me off my feet, and threw me down on my face, so as to make my nose gush out with blood. Two of the servants likewise had the same fate. It demolished one half of a small hut as if it had been cut through with a knife, and dispersed the materials all over the plain, leaving the other half standing. *Bruce*.

This was Job's greatest loss and severest trial. In tracing the dark and blood-red cycle of Job's afflictions, we miss the purpose for which these things were written, if we do not learn to hold all our blessings with a loose hand. There could be no one whose estate was better gotten, better founded, or better managed than Job's; yet in one short day all was gone. In the morning he had a fair estate and numerous children, in whom he saw the roots of his honors planted deep. In the things of this world, all was as great and good as the heart of man could desire. But in the evening he stood among the ruins of his greatness, poor, childless, desolate. *Kitto*.

20. Then Job arose—then only, not until his heart was smitten by the loss of his children—**and rent his mantle.** The outer robe worn by men of rank. The shaving of the head, an act done slowly and carefully, indicates mastery over the strong passion; there was no wild tearing of hair, but simply the adoption of the usual form of mourning. **Worshipped.** He prostrated himself, the most solemn act of adoration; thus directly, though unconsciously, refuting the assertion that he would renounce God in bereavement. *Cook*.—*Afflictions send the people of God home to God.* When God is striking, then Job is praying; when God is afflicting, then Job falls to worshipping. Grace makes every condition work glory to God, and God makes every condition work good to them who have grace. *Caryl*.

21. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the

name of the Lord. Oh, victory ! What were the conquest of a realm—what all that the earth calls glory, to this ? The man has conquered himself ; and in so doing Satan is conquered too. Little knew Job the great conclusions that hung upon that issue. The “sons of God” once more “shouted for joy ;” and the enemy for the time withrew defeated, but still unconvinced and still implacable. *Kitto.*

So far is Job from giving up his confidence in the goodness of the Lord that he strengthens himself in this confidence by the very greatness of the calamity that he has suffered, and draws his argument of praise for the multitude of God’s mercies from the very bitterness of the cup that is now pressed to his lips. The more deeply he mourns the treasures which have been taken away from him, the higher is his appreciation of the gracious kindness of Him who bestowed them. Thus the more profoundly he grieves, the more fervently he still blesses the name of the Lord. W. H. G.—He has still the same great and good thoughts of God that ever he had, and is as forward as ever to speak them forth to His praise ; and can find in his heart to bless God, even when He takes away, as well as when He gives. Thus must we *sing both of mercy and judgment* (Ps. 101 : 1). He blesses God for what was given, though now it was taken away. When our comforts are removed from us, we must thank God that ever we had them, and had them so much longer than we deserved. He adores God even in taking away, and gives Him honor by a willing submission ; nay, he gives Him thanks for good designed him by his afflictions, for gracious supports under his afflictions, and the believing hopes he had of a happy issue at last. *H.*

Mighty is the faith that blesses God while smiting our comforts to the ground. The grace enjoined on New Testament believers is exemplified in this Old Testament saint (1 Thess. v. 18). To bless God in our comforts is the way to have them increased ; to bless Him in our afflictions the way to have them removed [*Augustine*]. *T. Robinson.*—If we bless God in our afflictions, then our afflictions are blessings unto us. We have so much blessing in our afflictions as we can bless God for our afflictions. Here is an heavenly alchemy : Whatsoever affliction you touch with blessing God, you turn that affliction to a blessing. *Caryl.*

“The Lord gave.” Look upon all you enjoy as the free gift of a covenant God ; hold the Giver fast, but hold the gifts with a trembling

hand. Perhaps you may be constrained to say of some of your sweetest enjoyments, “The Lord hath taken away.” Love saw that they would do you harm, and that it is best for you to be without them ; therefore in love God takes them away. Love is the same in God when giving as when taking away ; therefore, what good reason have we to say for both, “Blessed be the name of the Lord !” Here you see the work of faith. It sees the Lord’s name written upon every enjoyment ; it owns the Lord’s right to give or take away ; it bows to the Lord’s sovereign will, and says, Lord, Thou doest all things well ; though what Thou doest I cannot now know, yet I shall know hereafter ; I am sure there is a Father’s love and wisdom in all ; oh, that all may be sanctified to me and I profited by all. Thus, as faith in Christ brings us to the knowledge of God to enjoy peace with Him, so it teaches submission to His will and to bless His name at all times. Rejoice in the Lord. *W. Mason.*

22. Sinned not, nor charged God with foolishness. Imputed no folly or injustice to God. Ascribed nothing to God unworthy of His justice, goodness, and wisdom. Entertained no dishonorable thought, uttered no murmuring word against Him. *T. Robinson.*—If Job had let Satan carry away his good conscience, he would soon have unbound him, and let him have his estate and children again. It is not a form of religion, but its power, that the devil maligns. The profession of Judas, Satan knew, did not put him a step out of his way to hell. The devil can live very peaceably, as a quiet neighbor, by the door of such as will content themselves with an empty profession ; this alters not his property, nor touches his copyhold. *Gurnall.*

That we may properly appreciate the conduct of Job in his affliction, we must take into consideration that those revelations had not yet been made upon which the believer now so firmly rests his hope in times of deep distress. He grappled with the mystery of affliction in all its unexplained darkness and difficulty until his own soul found rest. Those cheering views of truth to which he fought his way, or which were graciously vouchsafed to him in his trial, have been the heritage of God’s people ever since. Simple and obvious as they now appear to us from frequent repetition, they had never been distinctly formulated, and no clear conception of them had ever been reached. W. H. G.

Job was obliged to work out the problem as best he could in darkness and desertion and

wretchedness, and patiently to await "the end of the Lord." But through the life and sorrow and death of the Son of Man, it has come to pass that Job's experience need never be repeated, to any Christian at least, so far as the *meaning* of sorrow is concerned and the presence and purpose of God in affliction. The particular result which God may be meaning to work out for you or me through trouble may not indeed be plain; but we can never be in doubt that God is *in* the trouble, that God is *using* the trouble for good, that God is *controlling* the trouble so that it shall not exceed our strength, that by the trouble God is testing the reality of our faith and the sincerity of our motives, and purging out the dross of selfishness, and that out of the trouble He means to bring a thoroughly tried and proved character, which "shall appear to praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." *Vincent.*

FALLEN ANGELS AND THEIR CHIEF.

We know that the trial of the angels has taken place. Holy Scripture makes known to us the result of it, though without telling us in what it consisted. This result differs in one very material point from that in our own case. With us the race altogether is fallen, just because we are a race, and in that method of existence, the fate of all the individuals is bound together, at least according to the order of nature. Humanity is like a single tree with many branches; cut the trunk, and each branch is as completely severed from the root by that one blow as if it had itself been struck. The case must be quite different where there is no race, no filiation, no species. With the angels, then, trial may have had different or opposite results in different cases. And according to Scripture, we find that this possibility became a reality. It tells us of certain angels that they "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation;" that they "abode not in the truth;" while to others is given the title of "holy angels" and "elect angels." The former, then, have abjured the law of their existence, the will of their Creator; that is to say, they have made their own will the principle of their actions. They have thus fallen from the sphere of truth, which is only in God, into that of falsehood; their existence has become factitious, they oscillate unceasingly between illusion and imposture, alternately deceived and deceiving. For there exists no support outside of their own being to which they can attach themselves. They no longer possess God, from whom they have separated themselves, and with whom the faith-

ful angels are still in communion; neither can they enjoy the world, with which the nature of their organs does not allow them to communicate directly—that world which forms a temporary compensation for sinful men who have lost God. They live and act in the void of their own subjectivity, a void which they ever seek to people with their own lying creations. The only consolation they have for the loss of God consists in fighting against all that is good and true, and in seducing other free beings, whom they seek to drag with them into their own feverish activity, purely negative, and constantly powerless. *Godet.*

Jesus distinctly recognized the existence of Satan, and a kingdom of evil spirits marshalled under Satan for the destruction of mankind. The war which began in heaven has been transferred to this world, and waxes fiercer as the end draws near. Christ came to destroy the power and the works of the devil; and while, by His teaching, His atonement, and His Spirit, He sought to deliver men personally from the dominion of Satan, He also maintained, in the region of spiritual forces, a direct conflict with the powers of darkness. The fact that He cast out devils was proof that the Spirit of God wrought in Him, and that the kingdom of God was mightier than the kingdom of Satan. Every man must choose between these kingdoms, between evil and good, between darkness and light, between Satan and God. "There is and can be in the world *no middle party*; they who are not with Christ, who do not gather with Him, are against Him and His work, and, as far as in them lies, are undoing it." The mightiest spiritual forces are struggling for the possession of the soul of man: on the one hand, Satan, the tempter of our first parents, the "father of lies," with his subtle devices of temptation; and, on the other, the Holy Spirit of light, truth, and love, with His influences of grace. No one can be passive in this conflict of spiritual powers; and as one chooses his alliance here will be his state and portion in the hereafter. J. P. T.

The question of Satan's personality is one relating to the credibility of the Scriptures. The existence of the devil is so clearly taught in the Bible, so necessarily a part of the revealed Word, so legible on its very face, and so thoroughly interwoven with all of its deliverances, that to doubt it is to doubt the authenticity of the Bible itself. Having the same proofs of the personality of Satan that we have of any other being unseen by us, they who preach a symbolical devil should also preach a symbolical Adam,

a symbolical Christ, a symbolical God, a symbolical universe. *T. McRae.*—The Satan of Scripture is individual and personal. It is he who is said to have tempted Christ, to have prompted Judas in his sin, to have filled the heart of Ananias, to have hindered the apostle in a proposed journey, to have baffled him with some unknown ailment. He is described as tempting the saints, as going about like a roaring lion, as counteracting the effect of the word of God, as sowing tares among the wheat, as the instigator of persecution against the church. To destroy Satan's power was the special object of Christ's coming. He is the spirit who works in the disobedient, and who blinds the eyes of them that believe not. To the unbelieving world he stands in a special relation as its prince and patron. For him and his angels there is reserved "the lake of fire and brimstone." Moreover, this Satan does not stand alone in his opposition to Christ—he is Beelzebub, the prince of devils. He is ruler of a kingdom. His angels are mentioned as well as himself. Christians are warned against the wiles of the devil, and are also enjoined to put on the whole armor of God if they would wage a successful warfare "against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world." In short, over against the kingdom of God, of which He is the head and for the coming of which we are taught to pray, stands the kingdom of darkness, of which Satan is the head, and from which it is our privilege as Christians to be delivered. Yes. Satan is no abstract law or ideal conception of evil, but a personal being, conscious and distinctively active as man, though with faculties immeasurably beyond any we possess. *T. A. Nelson.*

Surely, if there is any petition that we offer in all sincerity and with agonizing fervency, that which our blessed Lord has taught us should be so offered, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." He who has any just sense of his own weakness and frailty, and of the frightful evil of sin, must be incessant in his entreaties that he may be upheld in steadfastness by an almighty arm, and guarded from the assaults of one who succeeded even in enticing angels to their fall, and prevailed over our first parents in all the vigor of their early integrity, and to whom we shall

prove an easy prey unless One stronger than the strong man armed interferes for our rescue. *W. H. G.*

Satan will not be wanting in any opportunity or advantage of setting upon the soul. He seeks to winnow, and comes when the corn is under the flail. Reckon, therefore, that when trouble cometh, the prince of this world cometh also, that you may be provided for him. Then is the time to take the shield of faith, that we may be able to quench his fiery darts. Watch, therefore, and pray, that Satan do not represent God falsely unto you. He that durst represent Job falsely to the all-seeing God will, with much more boldness, represent God falsely unto us, who see and know so little. *Owen.*—Since the fall, a godly life is not known *by perfection of grace*, so much as *by conflicts with sin*. Those that have most grace feel most trouble from Satan. Sometimes he distresses God's people with sad and doubtful thoughts; at other times with worldly and carnal temptations. We cannot set upon the performance of any duty, but he suggests slothful thoughts or carnal counsels! You must not then suppose yourselves forsaken of God because tempted of Satan. Such conflicts are not inconsistent with faith and piety. He adventured upon Christ Himself, after he had a testimony from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son." The way and means by which this resistance may be carried on is by the graces of God's Holy Spirit. There must be *faith*, which is the shield. There must be *prayer*, by which we strive to bring God on our side in the conflict. There must be *sobriety*. By which the apostle means a moderation of our affections in worldly things; which is necessary to this purpose, because all temptations are insinuated under the baits of pleasure, honor, profit, etc. There must be *watchfulness*: walking with fear and circumspection. But, above all, there should be reliance in the help and strength of Him who foiled the tempter, and who has put weapons into our hands that we may foil him also. *He* trod upon this old serpent when His heel was bruised upon the cross; and the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly. We need not doubt of help; for if Satan be an accuser, Jesus is an advocate; if there be evil spirits against us, there is the Spirit of God for us! *T. M.*

CHAPTER II.

1 AGAIN there was a day when the sons of
 God came to present themselves before the
 LORD, and Satan came also among them to
 2 present himself before the LORD. And the
 LORD said unto Satan, From whence com-
 est thou? And Satan answered the LORD,
 and said, From going to and fro in the
 earth, and from walking up and down in it.
 3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou
 considered my servant Job? for there is
 none like him in the earth, a perfect and an
 upright man, one that feareth God, and es-
 cheweth evil: and he still holdeth fast his
 integrity, although thou movedst me against
 4 him, to destroy him without cause. And
 Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin
 for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give
 5 for his life. But put forth thine hand now,
 and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will
 6 renounce thee to thy face. And the LORD
 said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand;
 7 only spare his life. So Satan went forth
 from the presence of the LORD, and smote
 Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot
 8 unto his crown. And he took him a pots-

herd to scrape himself withal; and he sat
 9 among the ashes. Then said his wife unto
 him, Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity?
 10 renounce God, and die. But he said unto
 her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish
 women speaketh. What? shall we receive
 good at the hand of God, and shall we not
 receive evil? In all this did not Job sin
 with his lips.

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all
 this evil that was come upon him, they came
 every one from his own place; Eliphaz the
 Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zo-
 phar the Naamathite: and they made an
 appointment together to come to bemoan
 12 him and to comfort him. And when they
 lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him
 not, they lifted up their voice, and wept;
 and they rent every one his mantle, and
 sprinkled dust upon their heads toward
 13 heaven. So they sat down with him upon
 the ground seven days and seven nights,
 and none spake a word unto him: for they
 saw that his grief was very great.

3. Movedst Me. A strong expression, equivalent to "didst tempt or instigate Me;" it belongs to anthropomorphical representations of God common in Holy Writ, and is most impressive as indicating a depth and extent of sympathy between man and the divine nature of which philosophy can give no account. Satan certainly did move God to act, since his calumny was the immediate occasion of Job's calamity, but the result was the complete overthrow of his own position, and the establishment of the principles which he assailed. *Cook.*—Satan is condemned for his allegations against Job—*thou movedst Me against him*, as an accuser, *to destroy him without cause*. Well is it for us that neither men nor devils are to be our judges, for perhaps they would destroy us, right or wrong; but our judgment proceeds from the Lord, whose judgment never errs, or is biased. Job is commended for his constancy, notwithstanding the attacks made upon him: "*Still he holds fast his integrity, as his weapon, and thou canst not disarm him; as his treasure, and thou canst not rob him of that; nay, thine endeavors to do it make him hold it the faster; instead of losing ground by the temptation, he gets ground.*" God speaks of it with wonder

and pleasure, and something of triumph in the power of His own grace—*still he holds fast his integrity*. Thus the trial of Job's faith was found to his *praise and honor* (1 Pet. 1: 7). H.

Without cause. In estimating the justice of Job's complaint, let us bear in mind that God Himself is represented as acknowledging that the visitation was causeless—that is, not just to Job's deserts. In estimating himself as unjustly punished, Job sees as God sees. J. F. G.

4. Satan will have Job's cause called over again. The malicious, unreasonable importunity of that great persecutor of the saints is represented (Rev. 12: 10) by his accusing them before our God day and night, still repeating and urging that against them which has been many a time answered; so did Satan here continue to accuse Job. H.

Skin for skin. The meaning is, "Who is there that will not give another skin to save his own; nay, part with his children, as well as his goods, to save his life?" *Bishop Patrick.*—The general sense is determined by the context: so long as a man's own person is untouched he may bear any loss with comparative firmness, give up the skin or life of others, even

of his children, so that his own be safe ; and if he attributes his preservation to God, may still retain his allegiance. Satan can recognize no principle of action but selfishness, and finds in it alone the secret of Job's firmness. *Cook*.—The unqualified statement is unqualifiedly false. Men will die for their honor, for their country, for God and truth. *Behrends*.

5. In his former aspersion of Job, Satan had only hinted that his religion was not quite genuine ; it was profitable, and therefore carefully attended to. Here he goes a great way deeper, and maligns human nature in its very humanity. Man is not only irreligious except for profit (so said Satan, and so say the ungodly always), but he is inhuman. What are usually regarded as possessions of the most irreligious men (the natural virtues)—love of kind and kindred, the deeper affections of family, on which so much fine sentiment has been expended—they are matters of profit too. Man cares little for friend or family, only he be safe himself. Put forth thy hand and touch his own bone and flesh, and his viperish nature will rise like the trodden serpent, and disown thee to thy face. A. B. D.—The essence of sin in its ordinary human manifestation is to be unable to live from any higher motive than self ; its essence in the life of Satan is to be unable to *conceive* of any higher motive than self. The spirit of evil in man often makes virtue tributary to self ; the spirit of evil in Satan takes the very constancy of virtue as proof only of more intense selfishness. The devil's logic in the case of Job ran in this wise : the more steadfast Job seems to be, the more inhuman must he be. *Evans*.

The hour of affliction is an hour of temptation. Satan loves to fish when the waters are troubled. He would bring us to hard thoughts of God by the hard things we suffer from God. "Touch him, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." In such stormy weather some vessels are cast away. Faith is a special antidote against the poison of the wicked one. It can read love in the blackest character of Divine dispensation, as by a rainbow we see the beautiful image of the sun's light in the midst of a dark and waterish cloud. *Swinnock*.—Satan knew, and we find by experience, that nothing is more likely to ruffle the thoughts and put the mind into disorder than acute pain and distemper of body. There is no disputing against sense. Paul himself had much ado to bear a thorn in the flesh, nor could he have borne it without special grace from Christ (2 Cor. 12 : 7, 9). H.

7. **Smote Job with sore boils.** With

a loathsome and universal leprosy, a disease common in the East and in hot countries. It is of two kinds, the white and the black. This latter is commonly called elephantiasis, because it renders the skin, like that of the elephant, uneven and wrinkled, with many furrows. *Hales*.—The malady with which Job was afflicted is now generally believed to have been the *leprosy of the Arabs*, called also elephantiasis, from the swelling of the feet and the thickening and roughness of the skin. In this disease small spots first appear on the skin ; then tumors of the size of a pea at first, increasing to that of a walnut or a hen's egg, with deep furrows between, covering the whole body. Finally, many of these suppurate and form ulcers, with a bloody and very offensive discharge, which dries and hardens to dark-colored scales. The face becomes bloated and glistening, the eyes feeble and watery, the breath offensive, the voice weak and hoarse, or entirely lost. The sufferer is subject to extreme dejection ; his nights are sleepless or harassed with frightful dreams. In the last stage of the disease the extremities perish and fall off, the bones and ligaments being destroyed by the ulceration. No cure has been found for this terrible malady, though the patient may survive many years. *Conant*.—The mere description of these symptoms will suffice to show with what infernal malice and skill such a disease was selected by one who well knew the influence of the body upon the mind. It was chosen as the fittest of any to bring the patriarch into that state of mind which Satan's purposes, or rather his arguments required ; and if the reader studies the utterances of Job attentively, he will be enabled without difficulty to trace the progressive influences of the disease upon his mind, and to measure the degrees by which his soul succumbed to its power.

8. That we may *realize* the picture of Job in his humiliation to our minds, the writer sets him visibly before us, seated in the ashes and scraping himself with a potsherd. We read this, and never more forget the picture these simple words print upon the mind. Nothing can surpass or approach the utter forlornness which this picture indicates. He who had been erewhile the greatest man in the east country seems to have been left to himself—forsaken of all. *Kitto*.

9. No personage in all the Scriptures has suffered more at the hands of critics, who have mistaken the true point of view, than the wife of Job, who cried, "Renounce God, and die." They will have it that she was destitute of

piety toward God, and of love and sympathy toward her husband. Taking the simplest view of the great scope of this book, and the characters who figure in it, nothing could be more unjust than such criticism. There is no intimation (unless the single allusion, 19 : 17, be overstrained to this end) in the whole book to any unhappiness in Job's domestic life. There is nothing to show that she was not his joy and solace, and united with him in his earnest religious life, approving and sharing his uprightness and pious trust in God. And when his subsequent prosperity came there is no hint that she marred in any way its happiness. Nay, so far as appears from the record she had been found strong enough in the faith to bear with meek submission the loss of property and family. She uttered no word of protest against Job's pious ejaculation, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ;" and from all that we can gather she had parted with all that she held dear on earth without a word of repining. I would understand it therefore as rather a proof of her unbounded love and admiration for her husband that though she could bear up under all that had gone before, she should now break down under despair ; as she saw the earthly prop and stay of her soul subjected to such misery and suffering, that her faith should pass under a cloud, and she should regard it as a pitiless and cruel providence that so holy a man as her husband should thus have judgments heaped upon him. The manifest design of the sacred writer is to bring out the marvellous faith of Job by contrasting it with the great faith of his wife, which, great as it was, failed at the last extremity. S. R.

10. The loving wife, in the frenzy of her anguish, has ranged herself unwittingly on the tempter's side. That she did this under the impulse of her affections seems to be implied in the connection. Her words are introduced as adding force to the temptation, and affording a fresh exhibition of the firmness of Job's piety. His reply to her suggestion is not harsh and severe, as it is frequently interpreted, but rather the language of pained surprise. It is not a stern censure, but a mild rebuke, though decided in its rejection of her ill-judged counsel. He does not charge her with being herself a foolish woman, whether the meaning be destitute of sense or lacking in true piety. He simply says this was not spoken like herself ; she had spoken not with her usual wisdom and pious feeling, but as one of the foolish women speaketh. "What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Job did not understand that pain and suffering were or could be anything else but evils. Yet regarding them simply in this light, as evils, and evils received from the hand of God, they did not blind him to the fact of the Divine goodness and the great preponderance of blessing received from His bountiful hand. The evil does not by any means match the good, much less outweigh it. Shall we forget the immensity of the benefits bestowed because He also sends some suffering ? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ? Job is again victorious, and the tempter is once more foiled. His piety has proved equal to the severity of this fresh test to which it was subjected. "In all this," the record runs, "did not Job sin with his lips." But Job's trial is not yet ended. He has passed through two stages of it, and has successfully surmounted them. Thus far his piety has borne the test triumphantly, to the confusion of the tempter. W. H. G.

A second victory has thus been gained over Satan. He has dealt his last direct blow against God's servant, and an answer has been found to his question, "Doth Job fear God for nought ?" It has been proved that Job's religion has some deeper foundation than self-interest ; that he serves God not from mercenary motives, but because he acknowledges God's right to his allegiance. Amid the wreck of his fortunes his integrity survives, and, bereft of all earthly good, his faith in God and in goodness stands firm. *E. Bayley.*—Job is now seen lying under a quaternion of troubles—adversity, bereavement, disease, and reproach. "He sinned not with his lips"—the thing Satan desired, endeavored after, and waited for. The temptation to murmur was *present*, but was *resisted and repressed*. Job is still by grace a conqueror over corrupt nature. *T. Robinson.*—Since it is out of doubt the devil may have some hand in our outward affliction, we are concerned to take so much the more care that he may not have his end upon us by it. A hand he may have, and we cannot determine how far ; but whether it be more or less, great care we are concerned to take how to frustrate his design. He has the most mischievous ends that can be, and designs worse things to us than the affliction which is the means, whatsoever that be. He would fain engage us in a controversy with God, would have us contend with him ; murmur, fret, blaspheme and curse God, and therewith send out our last and dying breath. That was his design upon Job. Let us labor to frustrate it, as he did. *South.*

At the close of the account of Job's first trial, and the manner in which he sustained it, the words occur : "In all this Job sinned not, *nor charged God foolishly* ;" that is, did not charge God with unreasonableness in so afflicting him. At the end of his second trial, the same words occur, with a variation, which is not without meaning : "In all this did not Job sin *with his lips*." Such declarations are not afterward repeated, and seem to be purposely introduced to mark the tendency of his state of feeling, and to assist our comprehension of his character. From the comparison of these two declarations, it appears clearly designed that we should understand that Job's mind had already, at the point last indicated, been touched with some hard thoughts of God, but he had hitherto fought against them, and refused to give them utterance. Hence, although he has no longer the praise of being, even in thought, sinless in this matter, the lower praise is allowed him that he had not yet sinned with his lips. That this is at this point inserted, and is afterward withheld, seems purposely intended to indicate that *afterward* he did "charge God foolishly," and did "sin with his lips." There can be no doubt that thus far Job is still set forth to us as an example of patience. His mastering of the unruly tongue is the very quality which the Apostle James sets forth as a high point of Christian perfection ; and we shall acquiesce, as we are bound to do, in this estimate, when we reflect how over-swift the tongue is to clothe the evil thought in words, so that it will often happen that it has been uttered almost before we are fully conscious that it has been conceived or entertained. He, therefore, who is enabled so to hold himself in that under the severest trials no ill-considered words—no words dishonoring God—fall from him, shows himself to be endowed with a grace of no mean account. *Kitto*.

The Apostle James, in the energetic and paradoxical language so peculiar to him, exhorts us "to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations ;" and calls "blessed" *not* the man who is not tempted, but him who "*endureth temptation* ;" that is to say, who undergoes it without yielding to it ; for, "when he is tried"—viz., when he has resisted in seasons of trial—"he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him." In order to enlighten Job's faith, to strengthen his heart and perfect his joy, the cruel display of Satan's malice was necessary. The perfidious detractors who cast Daniel into the lion's den were necessary to him, in order that he

might know during the peaceful night which he spent amid those terrible animals all the power and all the faithfulness of his God. Paul needed that "thorn in his flesh," that "messenger of Satan sent to buffet him," that he might be kept humble, and not "exalted above measure through the abundance of his revelations ;" that he might feel the power of that word which comforted him, and which will comfort the saints to the end of time—"When I am weak, then am I strong." Peter needed that court of the high-priest to show him his own weakness ; so that, after the confession and the forgiveness of his sin, he might reappear in the eyes of the church worthier than ever of the distinction which the Lord had bestowed upon him, and which he continued to him notwithstanding his fall. *Monod*.

God is educating us not for immediate effects merely, but for eternity. All our discipline is for lasting purposes, not transitory results ; and God will form us to *habits* of life, not mere temporary excitements. God will work in us *elements* of character, not mere fitful impulses. We look too much to *present* frames, enjoyments, fruits ; God looks to eternal results, and an eternal life of holiness and glory. We look to feelings, emotions, speculations ; God looks to active habits, and a life made up of principles and habits, which shall be the eternal, inalienable nature of our being. G. B. C.—Measure not God's love and favor by your own feeling. The sun shines as clearly in the darkest day as it does in the brightest. The difference is not in the sun, but in some clouds which hinder the manifestation of the light thereof. So God loves as well when He shines not in the brightness of His countenance upon us as when He does. Job was as much beloved of God in the midst of his miseries as afterward in the abundance of his mercies. *Sibbes*.

11-13. *Job's three friends, having heard of his misfortunes, come to condole with him.* How long time intervened between Job's second affliction and the arrival of his friends cannot be accurately ascertained. From the allusions in chaps. 7, 19 and 30, it is probable that a considerable time elapsed. A man of Job's rank would not choose his friends from the men of inferior station around him ; they would be, like himself, Eastern princes, all but his equals in rank and influence. Their abodes would therefore be distant from one another, and more distant from his, and travelling in the East is slow. The tone of Job's mind, too, as reflected in chap. 3, has undergone a change, the effect, no doubt, of protracted sufferings.

A. B. D.—Owing to the distance, and the leisurely modes of travel and of sending reports in the East, very likely the “months of wretchedness” of which Job speaks in chap. 7 : 3 intervened before the friends reached him. J. F. G.

11. Three of them are here named—Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. We shall meet with a fourth after, who, it should seem, was present at the whole conference—namely, Elihu ; whether he came as a friend of Job, or only as an auditor, does not appear ; these three are said to be his *friends*. H.—Teman was a city of Edom (Jer. 49 : 7, 29 ; Ezek. 25 : 12, 13) ; Shuah was a district in the “east country” of

Arabia Petræa, where Abraham’s sons by Keturah were settled (Gen. 25 : 2, 6) ; Naamah was a city of Edom (Josh. 15 : 21, 41). *Hales*.

12, 13. They could not more delicately express their commiseration for him in his terrible sorrows, which it was beyond the power of human helpers to mitigate or to relieve. There is no room for supposing that they entertained any other than the most friendly feelings, or that any ungenerous suspicions had as yet taken possession of their minds as to the reality of Job’s piety, or the reasons of these extraordinary sufferings which had been sent upon him. W. H. G.

CHAPTER III.

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| <p>1 AFTER this opened Job his mouth, and
 2 cursed his day. And Job answered and
 said :
 3 Let the day perish wherein I was born,
 And the night which said, There is a man
 child conceived.
 4 Let that day be darkness ;
 Let not God regard it from above,
 Neither let the light shine upon it.
 5 Let darkness and the shadow of death claim
 it for their own ;
 Let a cloud dwell upon it ;
 Let all that maketh black the day terrify it.
 6 As for that night, let thick darkness seize
 upon it :
 Let it not rejoice among the days of the
 year ;
 Let it not come into the number of the
 months.
 7 Lo, let that night be barren ;
 Let no joyful voice come therein.
 8 Let them curse it that curse the day,
 Who are ready to rouse up leviathan.
 9 Let the stars of the twilight thereof be
 dark :
 Let it look for light, but have none ;
 Neither let it behold the eyelids of the morn-
 ing :
 10 Because it shut not up the doors of my
 <i>mother’s</i> womb,
 Nor hid trouble from mine eyes.
 11 Why died I not from the womb ?
 Why did I not give up the ghost when my
 mother bare me ?
 12 Why did the knees receive me ?
 Or why the breasts, that I should suck ?</p> | <p>13 For now should I have lain down and been
 quiet ;
 I should have slept ; then had I been at
 rest :
 14 With kings and counsellors of the earth,
 Which built up waste places for themselves ;
 15 Or with princes that had gold,
 Who filled their houses with silver :
 16 Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not
 been ;
 As infants which never saw light.
 17 There the wicked cease from troubling ;
 And there the weary be at rest.
 18 There the prisoners are at ease together ;
 They hear not the voice of the taskmaster.
 19 The small and great are there ;
 And the servant is free from his master.
 20 Wherefore is light given to him that is in
 misery,
 And life unto the bitter in soul ;
 21 Which long for death, but it cometh not ;
 And dig for it more than for hid treasures ;
 22 Which rejoice exceedingly,
 And are glad, when they can find the grave ?
 23 <i>Why is light given</i> to a man whose way is
 hid,
 And whom God hath hedged in ?
 24 For my sighing cometh before I eat,
 And my groanings are poured out like
 water.
 25 For the thing which I fear cometh upon me,
 And that which I am afraid of cometh unto
 me.
 26 I am not at ease, neither am I quiet, neither
 have I rest ;
 But trouble cometh.</p> |
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THE cry of misery is thrice repeated in the chapter :

1-10. Would God I had never been conceived or born.

11-19. Would God I had died from my birth.

20-26. Why does God continue life to the wretched, who long for death ? · A. B. D.

The opening of Job's first speech reveals something of the obscure march of his soul during those silent days. The first feeling of a soul thus plunged into undeserved misery we can readily divine—the sense of utter bewilderment. This is the feeling that finds expression in Job's first speech, wherein he opens his mouth and curses his day. Weariness of life, passionate desire for death with its rest and its oblivion, which are the emotions that shape his utterance, are after all but the surface-waves of his agitation ; its deep cause lies in his feeling that his life has lost its guidance and direction. The only outlet for his overburdened heart, in this opening speech, is just to sigh over a life that contains no reason for living. It is worthy of remark that Job's question is not, why he is punished, but why a life so bitter and dark should have been given at all. Punishment implies desert, or if not desert, then injustice. To have given his affliction the name of punishment would have set him at once in the attitude of seeking for its cause, either in himself or in God. That the cause should be in himself, either as wicked, or even as unconsciously corrupt through the innate sinfulness of men, has never entered his mind ; on the contrary, one great element of his bewilderment is his consciousness of the watchful solicitude with which he has hitherto led a life of faithful integrity before God. No more is he ready to fasten the cause, even by remote implication, upon God. J. F. G.

Day after day, week after week, he is still compelled to drag his heavy burden. How long we know not. Through all this protracted period he bore his grief in silence. But at length nature can hold out no more : he can endure it no longer, and he gives vent to the most distressed sighs and groans ; but in it all observe that he does not rail against God. In the most passionate manner he utters his wailing cry, " Oh, that he had never been born, or that when born he had perished ! " He longs for death ; he would clutch at it as the miser grasps his gold. Why is this coveted privilege of death denied him ? The sentences are not to be nicely weighed. They must be judged of from the situation of Job. They are the language of one tortured beyond endurance, who cannot

support the anguish that he suffers, and whose life has become an intolerable burden. Allowance must be made for these paroxysms of helpless, hopeless sorrow. His strength was not the strength of stones, nor his flesh of brass. He was incapable himself of weighing what he uttered. It only represents the bitterness of irrepressible woe. Still, bruised as he is, hopeless of good, with but one wish, and this that he might die, Job does not reproach or revile his Maker. The tempter has broken his spirit, and crushed him to the earth ; but he has not succeeded yet in wresting from him his integrity or bringing him to forsake his God. · W. H. G.

A paroxysm of violent grief vents itself in the following imprecations. The passion, however, subsides a little in the latter part of the speech, and flows in the soft complaining strain of elegy. This impotence of mind in Job, so inconsistent with his former firmness, may be accounted for in part from the influence of his disease ; to which must be added his not having obtained any abatement of his affliction notwithstanding his submission, and his suspicion, from the silence of his friends, that he was to expect no consolation from them. *Scott*.—Job is neither rigidly to be taxed with blasphemy or profaneness, nor totally to be excused for this high complaint. It must be granted that Job discovered much frailty and infirmity, some passion and distemper, in this complaint and curse ; yet notwithstanding we must assert him to be a patient man, yea, a mirror of patience ; for consider the greatness of his suffering, the multiplicity of his troubles ; that his complainings and acts of impatience were but few, but his submissions and acts of meekness under the hand of God were very many ; take also into consideration that, though he did complain, and complain bitterly, yet he recovered out of these complainings ; he recalls what he had spoken, and repents of what he had done. *Caryl*.

In this wild and passionate outburst of feeling it is important to mark that there is no approach to the impiety which Satan hoped to provoke. The language of the sufferer is *reckless* and *vehement*, but it comes from the depths of a single and simple heart. As yet there is not even a complaint of injustice, not a question of the providence which has allowed the affliction. Existence indeed has become inexpressibly miserable, and for a time the active trust once habitual to this pious soul is paralyzed. Sick in body and sick in mind, his one wish is for death to come to end the weary scene of monotonous, never-ending pain that robs him

of thought and rest, and even of hope. *Aglen.*
—Surely Satan was deceived in Job, when he applied that maxim to him, *All that a man hath will he give for his life*; for never any man valued life at a lower rate than he did. H.

1-10. With regard to the mere fact of Job's cursing the day of his birth, and so forth, this is much less offensive than some of his subsequent utterances. It is less offensive to an Oriental than to a European imagination. The feelings of grief, of despair, of hate, of joy which with us are vented in the simplest forms of expression, are in the East carried to the utmost limits of language and thought, are *applied* in all their possible circumstances. That this kind of language was not regarded as more heinous than such phrases in common use as we have produced is shown by the fact that (not to mention other instances) the Prophet Jeremiah curses his days in terms as hot and passionate, though "less amplified," as does our patriarch in this place, and for the very same reason too—"Because he came into the world to see labor and sorrow, and that his days were consumed with shame." Job is certainly not more to be blamed than Jeremiah—perhaps less, for the prophet possessed the light of a brighter revelation than was afforded to the patriarch. *Kitto.*

It was not so bad as Satan promised himself; Job cursed his day, but he did not curse his God; was weary of his life, and would gladly have parted with that, but not weary of his religion; he resolutely cleaves to that, and will never let it go. The dispute between God and Satan concerning Job was not whether Job had his infirmities, and whether he was subject to like passions as we are (that was granted), but whether he was a hypocrite, and secretly hated God, and, if he were provoked, would show it; upon trial, it proved that he was no such man. Nay, all this may consist with his being a pattern of patience; for though he did thus speak unadvisedly with his lips, yet, both before and after, he expressed great submission and resignation to the holy will of God, and repented of his impatience; he condemned himself for it, and therefore God did not condemn him; nor must we, but watch the more carefully over ourselves, lest we sin after the similitude of this transgression. H.

11-13. The whole strophe contains strong reasons for his cursing the night of his conception and birth. It should rather have made the womb barren, and so have withdrawn the sorrow he now experiences from his unborn eyes. The four questions (vs. 11, 12) form a climax.

He follows the course of his life from its commencement in embryo to the birth, and from the joy of his father, who took the new-born child upon his knees, to the first development of the infant, and he curses this growing life in its four phases. *Delitzsch.*

17. How much is here contained in a few words! The grave, it is the boundary line of wrongdoing—"there the wicked cease from troubling." The grave, it is the close of labor—"there the weary are at rest." The grave, it is the refuge of the bond-slave—"there the prisoners rest together," no more afraid of the oppressor's scourge. The grave, it is the triumph of equality: the small and the great are there, "no distinction between master and servant." Liberty, equality, fraternity, striven for in the world of the living, is the fundamental law in the world of the dead; the mightiest become equally defenceless with the most feeble, when Death points the finger; and every step we trace across the churchyard shows us the image of quiet, freedom, and repose! Yet let us remember that it is not death that is the deliverer of suffering humanity, but the Prince of life, who lived and suffered and died in order to redeem us both from the curse of sin and from the fear of death. Without Him there can be no tranquil glance upon the grave, and no peace when this opens before us. But with Him there is then also complete victory both over death and its terror, since we know who it is that died for us, and now liveth to all eternity. *Van O.*

There is nothing more striking about the state of those who have gone into the unseen world than the completeness of their escape from all worldly enemies, however malignant and however powerful. But there is something beyond the mere escape from worldly evil. Now the busy heart is quiet at last, and the weary head lies still. It is sometimes comforting, and we cannot say it is not sometimes fit and right, to think of a place where we shall find rest and quiet, where "the weary are at rest." But though a deep sleep falls on the body, it is only for a while, and indeed there is a certain delusion in thinking of the grave as a place of quiet rest. The soul lives still, and is awake and conscious, though the body sleeps; and it is our souls that are ourselves. Even that in us which does sleep—even the body—sleeps to wake again. Though these are Old Testament words, we read them in a New Testament light, as those who know that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life to all His people. These words speak of a better world. They point us

onward to heaven. The two great things of which they assure us and remind us are safety and peace. There is to be safety, and the sense of safety. "There the wicked cease from troubling." Not wicked men only, but everything wicked—evil spirits, evil thoughts, evil influences, and our own sinful hearts. When the wicked cease from troubling, there will be no trouble at all. "The weary are at rest." We know the meaning of all the vague and endless aspirations of our human hearts. It is that "this is not our rest." Our rest is beyond the grave. There is something of life's fitful fever about all the bliss of this life; but in that world the bliss will be restful, calm, satisfied, self-possessed, sublime. It will be "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." A. K. H. B. —To the saint Death changes many of his offices. He is the queller of strife and the calmer of care. The aching head throbs no more; the swollen heart fetches no more sighs. The weary are at rest. He is, in one sense, the Destroyer; but he is also the Restorer. He brings back, through Christ's victorious grace, the lost innocence and peace of Eden. Is he the Divider, sundering the nearest ties, and riving asunder the household bands? But he is also the Re-uniter, gathering me to my dead who sleep in Jesus, and to "the general assembly of the firstborn." Is he the curse of the law? Is he not also, through our blessed Master, who magnified and satisfied that law, become to us who believe the end of sin, the gate of paradise, and the guerdon of a new, a better, and an unending life? W. R. W.

20. Wherefore is light given. These inquisitive expostulations are the beginning of that striving with his Maker which increases to great boldness in the progress of the poem. *Scott.*—**23. To a man whose way is hid.** Why is light cast upon a man whom God hath made so miserable that there is no way to be hoped of his deliverance from this calamity; whom God hath shut up in this distress without the possibility of escape? *Bishop II.* —**Whom God hath hedged in.** Hath compassed round about with evils, so that he cannot get out. Before Job was hedged in with good things, so that no evil could come nigh him, but now with evils, out of which he could make no escape. *Ainsworth.*

Job reaches his defining-point, the real secret of his anguish of soul. He has lost the clew to God and God's ways, being plunged into an abyss of punishment for which he can find no cause. The way that he has hitherto taken, with its consciousness of Divine companionship

and friendship, is suddenly closed; there is no longer any outlook. J. F. G.

26. He had not been secure nor indulged himself in ease and softness, had not trusted in his wealth nor flattered himself with the hopes of the perpetuity of his mirth; yet trouble came to convince and remind him of the vanity of the world, which yet he had not forgotten when he lived at ease. Thus his way was hid, for he knew not wherefore God contended with him. Now this consideration, instead of aggravating his grief, might rather serve to alleviate it; nothing will make trouble easy so much as the testimony of our consciences for us that in some measure we did our duty in a day of prosperity; and an expectation of trouble will make it sit the lighter when it comes. The less it is a surprise, the less it is a terror. H.

This chapter exhausts all expressions of agony; there is not a gleam of hope in it; the heart is quite crushed; still, so far as regards the precise object of the trial, there is no giving way. Job neither surrenders his own integrity nor renounces his allegiance to God; not that his words are blameless, but the wrong in them belongs to the infirmity rather than to the corruption of man's nature. Shadows of dark superstition pass over Job's spirit and give a form to his complaints, but they are from without, and find no abiding place in his heart. It must be observed that some of his very strongest expressions have been adopted by prophets and great saints, and by the King of Saints Himself. *Cook.*

Job nowhere says that he will have nothing more to do with God; he does not renounce his former faithfulness; yet this speech is to be regarded as the beginning of Job's sinning. If a man on account of his sufferings wishes to die early, or not to have been born at all, he has lost his confidence that God, even in the severest suffering, designs his highest good; and this want of confidence is sin. *Delitzsch.* —These wild and wrongful utterances of Job sinful as they are, yet speak volumes for his *habitual* trust in God. The ground of his despair is that God has forsaken him. This appears more and more clearly in his further utterances. *Vincent.*—His soul is cast down, but not destroyed; perplexed, but not in despair. It is on all sides harassed; without are fightings, within are fears; but the will is inflexible on the side of God and truth, and the heart, with all its train of affections and passions, follows it. The man does not wickedly

depart from his God ; the outworks are violently assailed but not taken ; the city is still safe and the citadel impregnable. Heaviness may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning. The reader who closely examines the subject will find that this was the case of Job. The following chapters show the conflict of the soul ; the end of the book, God's victory and His exaltation. Satan sifted Job as wheat, but his faith failed not. *A. Clarke.*

CHAPTER IV.

1 THEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,
 2 If one assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved ?
 But who can withhold himself from speaking ?
 3 Behold, thou hast instructed many,
 And thou hast strengthened the weak hands.
 4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling,
 And thou hast made firm the feeble knees.
 5 But now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest ;
 It toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.
 6 Is not thy fear of God thy confidence,
 And the integrity of thy ways thy hope ?
 7 Remember, I pray thee, who *ever* perished,
 being innocent ?
 Or where were the upright cut off ?
 8 According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity,
 And sow trouble, reap the same.
 9 By the breath of God they perish,
 And by the blast of his anger are they consumed.
 10 The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion,
 And the teeth of the young lions, are broken.
 11 The old lion perisheth for lack of prey,

And the whelps of the lioness are scattered abroad.
 12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me,
 And mine ear received a whisper thereof
 13 In thoughts from the visions of the night,
 When deep sleep falleth on men,
 14 Fear came upon me, and trembling,
 Which made all my bones to shake.
 15 Then a spirit passed before my face ;
 The hair of my flesh stood up.
 16 It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof ;
 A form was before mine eyes :
There was silence, and I heard a voice, *saying*,
 17 Shall mortal man be more just than God ?
 Shall a man be more pure than his Maker ?
 18 Behold, he putteth no trust in his servants ;
 And his angels he chargeth with folly :
 19 How much more them that dwell in houses of clay,
 Whose foundation is in the dust,
 Which are crushed before the moth !
 20 Betwixt morning and evening they are destroyed :
 They perish for ever without any regarding it.
 21 Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them ?
 They die, and that without wisdom.

IN his first utterance, chap. 3, Job has not complained of injustice ; as yet, and before his friends have stung and wounded him, he makes no questioning of Providence—but why was life given him at all, if only for this ? Sick in mind and sick in body, but one wish remains to him, that death will come quickly and end all. It is a cry from the very depths of a simple and single heart. But for such simplicity and singleness his friends could not give him credit ; possessed beforehand with their idea, they see in his misery only a fatal witness against him. Job had sinned and he had suffered, and this wild passion was but impenitence and rebellion. *Froude.*

The third and last trial of Job is brought about by the harsh suspicions, the cruel reproaches, and the unjust charges of his friends. Their contention was, that under the righteous government of God there is always in this life an exact agreement between sin and punishment, and that the calamities of Job could only be accounted for on the assumption of great criminality on his part. The three friends were right in affirming that there is a close connection between sin and suffering. Our present life is passed under the moral government of God, and he must be blind who cannot trace *in it* the judicial dealing of God with men. Nay, it is only when we see in the course of

history a continuous judgment of the world, that our faith in a *final judgment* can be rational and strong. The future life is not the beginning, but the completion of our existence. There is no break in the continuity of our being. If sin does not even here work ruin, then there exists no hell; if salvation and happiness do not even here wait upon righteousness, then there exists no heaven. Scripture knows nothing of a God who only rises to power when this life is ended. Its God is from beginning to end a living God; and both in His retributive judgments and in His bestowing of present blessing He is ever enforcing His own great principle, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There was truth, therefore, in the contention of the friends: their error consisted in applying this principle, without any qualification, to Job. It never occurred to them that suffering might be inflicted as a test of virtue, or that it might be sent to lay bare the hidden defects of a godly life. *E. Bayley.*

Every word uttered by his friends finds its way to the sufferer's heart. He is wounded by their harshness, stung by their censures, exasperated by their reproaches, and driven into antagonism by their arguments. They are the professed advocates of religious obligation. They represent the cause of God, enforcing His claims on Job and justifying His ways with him in a spirit that repels him, with assumptions that experience does not sanction, and which his own inner consciousness falsifies. The unfairness with which they plead God's cause place him under additional temptation to reject that cause itself. The hopeless variance which they assume or create between God's justice and Job's integrity, for which latter he nevertheless has the testimony of his own conscience which he cannot surrender or falsify, tends to place before his mind a distorted image of the character of God. God appears to be torturing him for crimes which he has not committed, to be relentlessly pursuing him as an implacable foe, and without justice or reason to be employing His resistless power to crush him to the earth. This is the phantom which his friends are constantly setting before him, this false notion of God as unjust and pitiless toward him; and this his own intolerable sufferings, for which he cannot himself otherwise account, seem to rivet upon him. This phantom, apparently so real, he is incessantly obliged to fight, or it would drive him to absolute despair and force him to give up his confidence and trust in God, and thus throw him completely into the tempter's snare. This

is the point around which the conflict in Job's soul so fearfully rages. This is the very acme and crisis of the temptation. This unwelcome apparition, which his friends are constantly bringing up and dressing out before him, of a God of arbitrary power, whose justice, as they assert it, would be rank injustice, and who seems devoid of pity—this it is which fills him with the deepest anguish. His heart is all laid open before us, down to its lowest depths, in his discourses with his friends. We see all the tumult of his soul in its conflicting emotions.

We have reason to believe that these friends of Job were eminent, wise, and good men. The whole tenor of their speeches shows that they were concerned both for the honor of God and for the spiritual welfare of Job. They advocate and approve what is good, they reject and condemn the bad. Their discourses sparkle with gems of morality and religious truth. Their reasoning is fallacious, indeed, because built on false though specious premises; but their arguments are coherent and strongly put. They fail to convince or to confute Job, but it is from no want of skill in advocacy. It is a matter of personal consciousness about which they contend. No subtleties and no cogency of demonstration can convict him of offences of which his own conscience pronounces him innocent. They misinterpret the ways of Providence, and fail to explain the mystery of Job's sufferings. But this is from no mental incapacity. Job can see no farther into this dark dispensation than they can. He knows that they are mistaken. But he no more understands the real state of the case than they do. The fact is that the enigma is insoluble by the unaided reason of man. God can alone declare the purpose of His afflictive dispensations, and this He had never yet revealed. These distresses of Job were to afford the occasion of shedding the first rays of light upon it. *W. H. G.*

The great debate is divided into three circles of speeches: (1) chaps. 4-14; (2) chaps. 15-21; (3) chaps. 22-31. Each of these three circles contains six speeches, one by each of the three friends in succession, with a reply from Job. In the last round, however, the third speaker, Zophar, fails to come forward. This is a confession of defeat; and Job, resuming the thread of his reply to Bildad, carries it through a series of chapters, in which, with a profound pathos, he contrasts his former greatness with his present misery, protests his innocence before Heaven, and adjures God to reveal to him the cause of his afflictions. *A. B. D.*

CHAPS. IV.-XIV. THE FIRST CIRCLE OF SPEECHES.

In the first round of debate, each of the three friends addresses the unhappy chief, and he replies to each in succession, concluding with an appeal from their judgment to God. They assert that the righteous God blesses the just, and punishes the unjust. Job replies that it is not uniformly so seen; that he himself, for example, while just, is made to suffer; and that, in point of fact, the just often endure wrong, and the wicked are allowed to triumph. The philosophy of those Arabian sages was too narrow for the case; and Job, in his last address, told them plainly that they were "physicians of no value," and that he appealed from them to that very God on whose providence they dilated with such confidence. At the same time he was sore perplexed, for he, like his friends, had been wont to connect all suffering with punishment for sin, and knowing himself free from presumptuous sin, he passed through a dreadful intellectual strife and moral agony. D. F.—Job's disputing with God is as terrible as it is pitiable. It is terrible, because he uplifts himself, Titan-like, against God; and pitiable, because the God against whom he fights is not the God he has known, but a phantom which his temptation has presented to his dim vision—a phantom in no way differing from the inexorable ruling Fate of the Greek tragedy. D.

Speech of Eliphaz, chaps. 4 and 5.

Eliphaz, who speaks first in each dialogue, is evidently the oldest of the three, as he is the most dignified, the calmest, and the most considerate. He is the only one whose words (at the outset) convey sympathy with the pain they inflict. He comes forward under a sense of duty and with an apology. *Aglen.*—It is the most elaborate discourse of the friends, and anticipates substantially their whole argument. It is the argument that everything in the world comes by justice and desert; that punishment has its sufficient cause in sin, open or secret; and that thus in God's wrath we may read and measure man's wickedness. This is what Job has always accepted as the fundamental principle of the Hebrew philosophy; nor is it to be called untrue, so much as inadequate and aside from the present case. Of course it can have but one implication. To talk of sin and punishment now, though in ever so general terms, is merely to accuse Job of sin. It is meaningless otherwise. So little is this implication disguised that forthwith Job is solemnly admon-

ished to make his peace with God—as if he had ever been at war with God! But there is the tell-tale leprosy; the friends cannot get over that. If it does not mean that some one has sinned, it seems to mean something about God which it were impiety to think of. J. F. G.

It is not to be denied that the arguments of Eliphaz are weighty, and are urged with much force of sentiment and beauty of language, wanting mainly correctness of application. He points out the inconsistency of a good man repining under calamity; and since he now so outrageously complained who had often exhorted others to fortitude, it might well raise a doubt whether he were the good man he seemed. He then advances the doctrine maintained by the friends throughout the book—that misery implies guilt, and insinuates that the sins of Job are the true cause of his affliction. This view he enforces not only by his own observation and experience, but by a remarkable vision with which he had been favored, but which is much less clearly applicable to his argument than he supposes. He admits that the wicked may seem for a time to be prosperous, but he contends that this is unstable and transitory, and that we had but to wait to see the end. It might well have been asked, *on his own ground*, why the afflictions of the apparently righteous might not also be transitory, and why not in their case also wait to see the end before finally deciding? He has enforced notions of the justice of God which he cannot reconcile with the sufferings of the righteous, and therefore he argues that all who suffer are wicked. Yet God is not inexorable, and if the sufferer confess the hidden guilt, and humble himself under the hand that smites, prosperity may yet be restored to him. *Kitto.*

Chap. 4 : 3, 4. Job instructed not only his own, but he instructed others. He did not confine his doctrine and advice to his own walls, but the sound thereof went wherever he went. He *instructed many*. *Caryl.*—Further, by deeds of helpfulness as well as words of sympathy, he encouraged, comforted, and upheld the weak and fainting everywhere. Strange that, with this knowledge of Job's long-tried character and beneficent life, Eliphaz could so instantly turn and rend the friendship of years with such harsh words and cruel judgment. B.

5. He makes too light of Job's afflictions—"It *touches* thee." The very word that Satan himself had used, chap. 1 : 11. Had Eliphaz felt one half of Job's afflictions, he would have said, "It smites me, it wounds me;" but speaking of Job's afflictions, he makes a mere trifle of it—

"It touches thee, and thou canst not bear to be touched." Men in deep distress must have grains of allowance and a favorable construction put upon what they say; when we make the worst of every word we do not as we would be done by.

6. How unkindly does he upbraid him with the great profession of religion he had made, as if it were all now come to nothing, and proved a sham—"Is not thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope the uprightness of thy ways? Does it not all appear now to be a mere pretence? For hadst thou been sincere in it God would not thus have afflicted thee, nor wouldest thou have behaved thus under the affliction." This was the very thing Satan aimed at, to prove Job a hypocrite and disprove the character God had given of him: when he could not himself do this to God, but He still saw and said, *Job is perfect and upright*, then he endeavored by his friends to do it to Job himself, and to persuade him to confess himself a hypocrite: could he have gained that point, he would have triumphed. But by the grace of God Job was enabled to hold fast his integrity, and would not bear false witness against himself. Those that pass rash and uncharitable censures upon their brethren, and condemn them for hypocrites, do Satan's work, and serve his interest more than they are aware of. H.

7. We may and often do err in attempting to read God's providence from the wrong end, by asking what God means by it, instead of inquiring what lesson we ourselves may learn from it. We may err in reading God's providence for others instead of for ourselves. We will greatly err if we say that those eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem; but we will likewise err if we deny that that lamentable accident had any moral significance at all. It was certainly meant as a warning to those on whom it did not fall, and it was for them to read its lesson for themselves. We may err in directing too exclusive attention to what we call special providences, and thinking too little of ordinary and every-day Divine protection. If a railway accident occurs, by which many are severely injured and some escape unhurt, we tell these last that they have great cause to thank God, which no doubt they have, but we probably forget that we ourselves have still greater cause to do so, inasmuch as we have travelled often and without accident. *James Smith.*

8. He that sows evil shall reap evil; he that soweth the evil of sin shall reap the evil of punishment. So Eliphaz told Job that he had

seen, "they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same." And that either in kind or quality, proportion or quantity. In kind, the very same that he did to others shall be done to him; or in proportion, a measure answerable to it. So he shall reap what he hath sown, in quality or in quantity; either in portion the same, or in proportion the like. *T. Adams.*—Everything reaps its own harvest, every act has its own reward, and before you covet the enjoyment which another possesses, you must first calculate the cost at which it was procured. For instance, the religious tradesman complains that his honesty is a hindrance to his success; that the tide of custom pours into the doors of his less scrupulous neighbors in the same street, while he himself waits for hours idle. My brother, do you think that God is going to reward honor, integrity, high-mindedness, with this world's coin? Do you fancy that He will pay spiritual excellence with plenty of custom? Now consider the price that man has paid for his success. Perhaps mental degradation and inward dishonor. His advertisements are all deceptive; his treatment of his workmen tyrannical; his cheap prices made possible by inferior articles. Sow that man's seed, and you will reap that man's harvest. Cheat, lie, advertise, be unscrupulous in your assertions, custom will come to you. But if the price is too dear, let him have his harvest and take yours; yours is a clear conscience, a pure mind, rectitude within and without—will you part with that for his? Then why do you complain? *F. W. R.*—Bountiful gifts of a gracious Providence, wealth and abundance, splendid opportunities for good, intellectual endowments, rare talents, or, in humbler life, openings for advancement and usefulness which might have led to distinction, are through the perverse folly of their possessors worse than wasted, and dark shadows are thrown across what should have been the brightness of a happy life. And then men speak of their bad luck, and murmur against the providence of God; as if one could sow the wind and not reap the whirlwind, or cut off the shadow of sin, remorse and shame and death. *Bishop Hervey.*

It is a hard truth that the fruit of forgiven sin does not die with the death of the tree that bore it. Even though we may find pardon for our errors, others must suffer for them, and we ourselves must also be sufferers notwithstanding our pardon. As Faber says of evil habits, so it might be said of single evil deeds: "Habits of sin, even when put to death as habits, leave many evil legacies behind them." No truth is

surer than that "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The real measure of a planted seed is its prospective crop. Beware of any sowing except for a harvest you would rejoice in. H. C. T.

If you waste your youth, no repentance will send the shadow back upon the dial, or recover the ground lost by idleness, or restore the constitution shattered by dissipation, or give again the resources wasted upon vice, or bring back the fleeting opportunities. If you forget God and live without Him in the world, fancying that it is time enough to become "religious" when you "have had your fling"—even were you to come back at last—and remember how few do—you could not obliterate the remembrance of misused years, nor the deep marks which they had left upon imagination and thought, and taste, and habit. The wounds can all be healed indeed; for the good Physician, blessed be His name, has lancets and bandages, and balm and anodynes for the deadliest, but scars remain even when the gash is closed. There is an aspect in which it is true that the very greatness of the previous sin may become the occasion for the loftiest devotion and the lowliest trust in a pardoned man. The effects may be so modified as to contribute to the depth and power of his Christian character. But even when the grace of God so modifies them, they remain. And though in some sense it be true that pardon is better than innocence, the converse is true, that innocence is better than pardon. "I would have you simple concerning evil"—for even when forgiven, it leaves on character and memory many a trace of weakness, many a painful record. A. M.

What growth is in the natural world, habit is in the moral. There is the same certainty in its laws, the same slowness and often imperceptibleness in its advance, the same immutability in its results. The causes remaining in operation, there is the same certainty of perfection, and the point of perfection once reached, the point where all the processes ever intended to be applied have accomplished their work, there can be no more change, in *kind*, forever. The season of these processes we call, in moral things, probation; the result is as immutable as that of seed time and harvest in natural things. When the processes are done, there can be no more change. A good man, when all the processes are finished, can never become a bad man, and a bad man, when all the processes are finished, can never become a good man. The world of processes and probations being finished, and character once completely formed, in one

of its two moulds, there can be no change forever. Such is the certainty and immutability of habit, the certainty of its laws and processes, the immutability of its results. *Cheever*.

10, 11. The sudden destruction of the wicked is thrown by Eliphaz into another graphic figure, the breaking-up and dispersion of a den of lions. There are five words used for lion in these verses, some of which are epithets taken from the characteristics of the lion; they are: Lion, roaring lion (rather than fierce lion), young lion, and strong (or, old) lion, and lioness—the whelps of the lioness. Between the lion and the wicked whom Eliphaz describes there are two points of resemblance: first, their strength or power; and second, their inherent violence of nature. This is the kind of men on whom afflictions fall that are final. The picture of the breaking-up of the lion's home is very graphic; in the midst of the strong lion's roaring and tearing of his prey, by a sudden stroke his roaring is silenced and his teeth dashed out; thus disabled he perishes for lack of prey; and the whelps, having no provider, are scattered abroad. The reality of the figure is seen in the breaking-up of the home of the wicked (5:2-5).

4:12-21 and 5:1-7. Having expressed his wonder that a righteous man like Job should fall into such utter despair under afflictions, forgetting that to the righteous affliction is but a discipline, Eliphaz seeks to draw Job back to consider what is the real cause of all affliction. This is the imperfection of man, an imperfection which he shares indeed with all created beings, in the highest of whom to God's eye there is limit and possible error. And this being so, murmuring can only aggravate his affliction by provoking the anger of God. The passage falls into two divisions. In the first (vs. 12-21), Eliphaz contrasts the holiness of God with the imperfection of all creatures, even the pure spirits on high, and much more a material being like man, and thus indirectly suggests to Job the true secret of his troubles. In the second (5:1-7), having laid this broad foundation, he builds on it a warning to Job against his murmurs. Only the wicked resent God's dealing with them, and by doing so bring increased wrath upon themselves till they perish.

14-16. Eliphaz depicts graphically the circumstances in which he received the message from heaven. In the dead night, in the midst of his perplexing thoughts upon his bed, a supernatural terror suddenly seized him. Then he was conscious of a breath passing before him (v. 15). Then he seemed to perceive a figure in his presence, too dim, however, to be dis-

cerned ; and at last a whisper of a voice gave utterance to the awful words that expressed the relations of man to God (v. 16). A. B. D.

16. *It stood, but I discerned not its aspect, a form before mine eyes, a hush, and I heard a voice.* The terms are the most vague and indefinite that could be found ; there was a form, yet shapeless and undistinguishable, a voice, but scarcely audible, or audible only to the inner sense. Milton takes from this his representation of Death :

“ If shape it could be called that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb ;
Or substance might be called that shadow
seemed.”

17. The voice answers the inward question, What account can be given of the apparent inequalities in God's ways ? Only that every man is essentially unjust in his sight, and therefore liable to punishment. Eliphaz seems to represent himself, and doubtless with truth, as having once been beset by doubts, which were cleared up by a revelation so dim and mysterious in its form as to be scarcely distinguishable from the inner movements of his consciousness. *Cook.*

The vision itself—as the description of a supernatural visitation, and of its effects upon the witness, is the most remarkable in the languages of men. There is nothing like it, or that comes near it. The reason is, that this is the description of a true vision by the man to whom it came ; whereas all other descriptions, the best of them, are ideal. Eliphaz describes, in that simplicity of eloquence which thrills the deepest, because it is beyond the reach of art, what he himself saw—what he himself felt ; and from the manner in which he speaks, we know that he did see, did feel, as he describes. We have numerous highly wrought poetical descriptions of supernatural appearances, but they all fail in some point or other—all want “ keeping.” They are either obscure in the aim at a cloudy sublimity, or they are petty in the minuteness of their details. The vision of Eliphaz is in the highest degree sublime—unapproachably sublime, without being obscure, and circumstantial, without being mean. “ It is impossible,” says Barnes, “ to conceive anything more sublime than the whole description. It was midnight. There was silence and solitude all around. At that fearful hour the vision came, and a sentiment was communicated to Eliphaz of the utmost importance, and suited to make the deepest possible impression. The time ; the quiet ; the form of the image, its passing along, and then suddenly standing

still ; the silence ; and then the deep and solemn voice—all were fitted to produce the profoundest awe.”

The vision asserts plainly enough that all men are sinners—that even the purest are far from being clean—and affirms the absolute rectitude of God, and the impiety of arraigning His moral government of the world. The just deduction from this would have been, that, seeing all men were sinners, all were with equal justice open to punishment, without any imputation upon the justice of God ; and hence, the ground for the special condemnation of Job as a sinner, because he was a sufferer, would be taken away. But Eliphaz, in eagerly availing himself of the statement that men were open to punishment for sin, as applicable to his argument against Job, puts out of view the correlative statement that all men were sinners. We need not be very severe upon Eliphaz for this, or suppose him to have been intentionally disingenuous. Men have not, even to this day, lost the habit of seeing only so much of an authoritative declaration as can be made to fall in with their preconceived opinions. *Kitto.*

17. More just than God. A man may be a man and yet be unjust, but God cannot be God and yet be unjust. A man may be a man and yet be impure, but God cannot be God and yet be impure ; so that justice and purity are not accidents or qualities in God, but His very essence and being. Destroy or deny the justice and purity of God, and you put God out of the world as much as in you lies ; for He cannot be God unless He be both just to others and pure to Himself. *Caryl.*

The ghost is asking this question still : “ Shall mortal man be more just than God ? ” Our age is baffled by the same perplexities which alarmed Job and his friends. It is from God Himself that man derives the terrors which scare him. The alarm, the fear, the awe, the moral misery—these are the assertion of the Divine within the soul. To the alarmed conscience now God comes by the Saviour, not by an apparition. The conscience is calmed amid its highest terrors by the “ blood of sprinkling ” and by the night-breezes of Gethsemane. From the darkness of Calvary comes a consolation to dispel all evil spirits and all night fears. *E. P. Hood.*

18. God is eternally holy, the fountain of holiness ; the creatures are derivatively and by participation holy. God is eminently and transcendently so ; the creatures in a finite degree. God is immutably so ; it is impossible it should be otherwise ; but no creature is out of an abso-

lute possibility of sin. In this sense it is here said that "He putteth no trust in His servants, and His angels He charged with folly;" and (15 : 15), "He putteth no trust in His saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight." *Archbishop Tillotson*.—The object of this whole argument is to show, that if confidence could not be reposed in the angels (because of the necessary limitations of their nature), and if all their holiness was as nothing before God, little confidence could be placed in man, and that it was presumption for him to sit in judgment on the equity of the Divine dealings. *Barnes*.—It is not meant that the good spirits positively sin, as if [to] sin were a natural necessary consequence of their creatureship and finite existence, but that even the holiness of the good spirits is never equal to the absolute holiness of God, and that this deficiency is still greater in spirit-corporeal man. *Delitzsch*.

19-21. Men are mortal, and dying. In death they are destroyed, and perish forever as to this world; it is the final period of their lives and all their employments and enjoyments here; their place will know them no more. They are dying daily and continually wasting—*destroyed from morning to evening*. In death all their excellency passes away; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death but die with them; nor shall their pomp, their wealth, or power descend after them. Their wisdom cannot save them from death; they die without wisdom, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves. It is so common a thing that nobody heeds it or takes any notice of it; they perish *without any regarding it* or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the subject of serious thought. H.

CHAPTER V.

1 CALL now; is there any that will answer thee?
And to which of the holy ones wilt thou turn?
2 For vexation killeth the foolish man,
And jealousy slayeth the silly one.
3 I have seen the foolish taking root:
But suddenly I cursed his habitation.
4 His children are far from safety,
And they are crushed in the gate,
Neither is there any to deliver them.
5 Whose harvest the hungry eateth up,
And taketh it even out of the thorns,
And the snare gapeth for their substance.
6 For affliction cometh not forth of the dust,
Neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;
7 But man is born unto trouble,
As the sparks fly upward.
8 But as for me, I would seek unto God,
And unto God would I commit my cause:
9 Which doeth great things and unsearchable;
Marvellous things without number:
10 Who giveth rain upon the earth,
And sendeth waters upon the fields:
11 So that he setteth up on high those that be low;
And those which mourn are exalted to safety.
12 He frustrateth the devices of the crafty,
So that their hands cannot perform their enterprise.

13 He taketh the wise in their own craftiness:
And the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.
14 They meet with darkness in the day-time,
And grope at noonday as in the night.
15 But he saveth from the sword of their mouth,
Even the needy from the hand of the mighty.
16 So the poor hath hope,
And iniquity stoppeth her mouth.
17 Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth:
Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.
18 For he maketh sore, and bindeth up;
He woundeth, and his hands make whole.
19 He shall deliver thee in six troubles;
Yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.
20 In famine he shall redeem thee from death;
And in war from the power of the sword.
21 Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue;
Neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.
22 At destruction and dearth thou shalt laugh;
Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.
23 For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field;
And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.

24 And thou shalt know that thy tent is in peace ;
 And thou shalt visit thy fold, and shalt miss nothing.
 25 Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great,

And thine offspring as the grass of the earth.
 26 Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age,
 Like as a shock of corn cometh in in its season.
 27 Lo this, we have searched it, so it is ;
 Hear it, and know thou it for thy good.

FIRST SPEECH OF ELIPHAZ—*Concluded.*

1. Call now. The meaning of this verse is sufficiently clear ; if Job does not submit himself to God's visitation without murmuring, he will find none to sympathize with him in heaven or earth ; men and angels are alike subject to God, and have neither the power nor, if good, the will to take part with His enemies. *Cook.*

—Job, in his present mood, need expect no sympathy or help from any quarter. After God has spoken there is none other—holy man or angel—who will either deign or dare to make reply to his (Job's) complaints. To reply, even, might foster the spirit of rebellion. *J. S. Burr.*

2. The connection of thought is this : Nothing can be done for a man who indulges such feelings as those which pervade Job's complaint, for wrath indicates folly or depravity (alluding to 3 : 1-10), and can have no end but destruction ; and envy, which prefers any lot to one's own, even that of non-existence or death (3 : 14-19), is sinful infatuation ; a word which corresponds to the Hebrew both in meaning and origin. *Cook.*—The murmurer against God is here designated, twice over, “ the foolish ; ” a term frequently used in the poetic Scriptures to designate a character of unwisdom, in respect to both the understanding and the heart ; and although these things are uttered as general truths, still their reference to Job is too manifest to escape recognition. *Curry.*

Jealousy slayeth. To ruminate upon evils, to make critical notes upon injuries, and to be acute in their apprehensions, is to add unto our own tortures, to feather the arrows of our enemies, to lash ourselves with the scorpions of our foes, and to resolve to sleep no more ; for injuries long dreamt on take away all rest. *Browne.*—The proud man hath no God ; the envious man hath no neighbor ; the angry man hath not himself. What good, then, in being a man, if one has neither himself nor a neighbor, nor God. *Bishop H.*

3-5. Their prosperity is short, and their destruction certain. He seems here to parallel Job's case with that which is commonly the case of wicked people. Job had prospered for a time, seemed confirmed, and was secure in his prosperity ; and it is common for foolish wicked men to do so. *I have seen them taking root,*

planted, and in their own and other's apprehension fixed, and likely to continue. We see worldly men taking root in the earth ; on earthly things they fix the standing of their hopes, and from them they draw the sap of their comforts. The outward estate may be flourishing, but the soul cannot prosper that takes root in the earth. *H.*

4. His children. An evident reference to the death of Job's children. Eliphaz dwells with complacency upon the result of a bad man's ruin ; his children are involved in it ; they are exposed to every kind of danger ; are broken to pieces by litigations (the Hebrew probably implies against one another) in the gate, where the courts of justice were held, and find no helper, none to take up their cause as advocate or intercessor ; a terrible picture of the misery which at all times in the East has fallen upon the orphans of criminal or suspected parents. *Cook.*

6, 7. Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, but man is born unto trouble. Two important and clearly related truths are here set together : The fact that trouble is the common and unavoidable lot of all men, and the assured truth that these things are not merely accidental. Back of both of these, in the mind of the speaker, is the great and abiding principle of the Divine government, that affliction—trouble—comes upon men as a result of sin ; or, as Paul sententiously puts the case, death is the wages of sin. A great truth is thus enunciated, which indeed leaves Job under the judgment of condemnation, but only in common with universal manhood. *Curry.*—The words rendered “ affliction ” and “ trouble ” are the same which occur in the preceding chap., v. 8—*i.e.*, evil and trouble. Eliphaz denies that they take place as results of natural laws, as the spontaneous produce of the soil ; wherever they are found they spring up because man's guilt has ploughed the ground and sowed the evil seed. Eliphaz states the cause of trouble, man inherits it as the portion of his corrupt nature, though it is only brought into activity by his own sin. *Cook.*

Sorrow is not an accident, occurring now and then, it is the very woof which is woven into the warp of life. It is the law of our humanity,

as that of Christ, that we must be perfected through suffering. And he who has not discerned the Divine sacredness of sorrow, and the profound meaning which is concealed in pain, has yet to learn what life is. The cross, manifested as the necessity of the highest life, alone interprets it. F. W. R.—Trouble must have great possibilities of blessing in it, or would not be so common in God's world. Surely we need not dread it so, when it brings in one hand the peaceable fruit of righteousness and in the other the joys of consolation for so many sorrowing souls. *Anon.*

How the Christian Scriptures abound with sayings about the necessity of disappointments, the uses of adversity, and the glory of suffering. How full they are of exhortations to be patient, to endure, to be steadfast—all implying our need of discipline. How sublimely, too, they teach us the true secret of endurance, in the life of Him “who, though a Son, learned obedience in the things that He suffered.” In this light we can understand why God makes life a trial. Our characters must be tested. There are evil tendencies in us which remain concealed and unknown, until we are tried—tendencies to a low, grovelling selfishness, which almost rejoices in another's pain—capacities for the darkest sins, which may burst into action in moments of passion. We *fancy* we hold the reins of our natures. We think we are strong, and rejoice in our fancied strength. And then God sends us trials, disappointments, bitter lessons of sorrow, and under their startling light we discover our weakness and evil. We grow earth-bound, become wrapped in life's transient interests; God sends us suffering, and in the long, lonely watchings of pain, we catch glimpses of eternal realities. *E. Hull.*

You do not suffer because God is indifferent. That your life is tried; that you seem to be resisted at every step by a subtle, spiritual power, that darkens your understanding and blunts your perception, stimulates your carnal nature and injects thoughts of evil into your mind, is no necessary sign that you are not in the very arms of God. Nay, it may be just the reverse, “for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.” Let none of us think to escape discipline. Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward. “I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil.” If you are a child of God, you will not escape discipline, but it is the will of the loving heart of Christ that you should be kept safe amid the ordeal. Let us be of a good courage, then, looking unto Jesus, our exem-

plar. “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” Blessed be God! that is our goal. The end will compensate for the agonies of its attainment. The crown is worth the strife. Think of this when the skies are dark, when the heart fails and the reason falters, when the hand is powerless, when fires are burning quick into the flesh, and even when the gateways into death and the grave are being opened. Aye, think of it when alone and in silence and in sorrow. And even when the white spray of the tempest is over thee like a garment think of this: It will not be long—the wrestling, the ordeal of conflict, the suffering is but for a while, then the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory, will bring us thither, and we shall at last assume our place and dignity among the thrones and dominion of heaven, and be crowned kings and priests unto God and the Father forever. “Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight.” *T. A. Nelson.*

9. Marvellous things.—In the progress of his argument, the mind of Eliphaz is dilated with the strong conception of the greatness and wisdom of God as evinced in His works of creation—touching thus incidentally upon that branch of the great argument, which is more adequately produced by the Lord Himself toward the close. God, he says, “doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number.” That in these expressions he has the material creation in view is shown by the context. The sense clearly is, that there is no possibility of computing—that the mind is wholly unable to grasp the great and marvellous things which the universe contains. *Kitto.*

13. The counsel of the froward is carried headlong. That is, if men will be winding and turning and thinking to catch others, or overreach the Lord Himself with tricks and turnings of wit, the Lord will meet and answer them in their own kind. He can turn as fast as they; he can put Himself into such intricate labyrinths of wisdom and craft as shall entangle and ensnare the most cunning wrestler of them all. *Caryl.*

17, 18. *Happy is the man whom God correcteth*, if he make but a due improvement of the correction. A good man is happy, though he be afflicted; for whatever he has lost, he has not lost his enjoyment of God nor his title to heaven; nay, he is happy *because* he is afflicted; correction is an evidence of his sonship and a means of his sanctification; it mortifies his corruptions, weans his heart from the world, draws

him nearer to God, brings him to his Bible, brings him to his knees, works him for and so is working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; *happy therefore is the man whom God correcteth.* Though He wounds, yet His hands make whole in due time; as He supports His people and makes them easy under their afflictions, so in due time He delivers them and makes a way for them to escape. All is well again; and He comforts them according to the time wherein He afflicted them. God's usual method is first to wound and then to heal, first to convince, then to comfort, first to humble and then to exalt; and He never makes a wound too great, too deep for His own cure. H.

It is a mercy that He will chastise; you may put your corrections among your mercies. His breakings of you are His blessings, His woundings are your cures; and by your own as by your Lord's stripes you are healed. And when you shall review and read over all His darker providences, and behold the wisdom and tenderness which is attempered with His severities, evidenced in His laying on so much, and yet no more than was needful, you will then write down with the Psalmist: "Thou in very faithfulness has afflicted me." *Richard Alleine.*—God never means harm to our lives when He sends afflictions to us. Our disappointments are God's appointments, and bring rich compensation. Our losses are designed to become gains to us as God plans for us. There is nothing really evil in the experiences of a Christian, if only God be allowed to work out the issue. Our Father sends us nothing but good. J. R. M.

The more a man is buffeted and wounded, disappointed and humiliated, wronged and persecuted, in this life, the more he comes to fall back upon the sovereign power of God. God is just, loving, omniscient, and almighty. The reins of the world never slip nor slacken in His hand. He is never mistaken, never forgetful nor negligent, never defeated, and nothing eventuates contrary to His will. Though He tolerate wrongs temporarily, He will right them. Though He permit suffering, He sees clearly the path along which it will find culmination in peace and joy. God is as good as He is strong, benevolent as He is wise, true as He is great. We can trust in Him, rest in Him, and we can assure ourselves that all that there is of Him in power, wisdom, love—is ours. The weakest of us is in Him stronger than all the powers of time, circumstance or enemies that may be arrayed against us. God is our Father, and no earthly father's love is so pure and true as His love. But for suffering and danger and

disaster we should never know how wondrous a heritage we have in God. *Interior.*

If it be wise for us to pursue the greatest good, is it not kind in God to lift off our burdens, and to mingle bitterness with the pleasures which tend to make us linger? Is He not kind, and kind as no friend was ever kind before, in waking us from unsafe repose, in hastening us on with His rod, in giving wings to the objects we attempt to grasp by the way, and which, taken and retained, would defeat our better aims? The sum, then, of all our sorrows is this, that we are denied lesser to prepare for greater goods; inferior enjoyments are embittered or taken away, to sharpen the relish and looking for those which are full, unmixed, and eternal. Thus it is that our "light afflictions," which are but for a moment, for time at most, "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." H. H.

Not prosperity, but adversity, commonly quickens and intensifies faith. It is when all else seems to fail, that God's loving control stands out as unfailingly sure. When you find a man of exceptionally strong faith, you find a man who has had exceptionally trying experiences. And when you are called to unlooked-for and severe trials, you may feel that here is a fresh proof that God loves you, and is drawing you closer to Himself by the surest means of faith promoting. H. C. T.—Sorrow and suffering, bereavement, disappointment, and "hope deferred," seem to have but one mission—to develop, refine and enlarge the susceptibilities, and to newly capacitate the mind for the reception of new and higher forms of blessedness than were before possible. Each special form of sorrow is attended with some special and correlative manifestation of the character, love, or grace of Christ—a manifestation which ever after remains in the mind as a source of everlasting consolation and "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Among the aspects of Christ's character and grace—aspects which induce the fullest and most abiding blessedness—are those which the Spirit has unveiled to the mind when some great sorrow lay upon the heart. Hence it is that afflictions, tribulations, and great heavinesses become almost sacred in the mind's regard, followed as they all are, and that so soon, with such "everlasting consolations and good hope through grace." *A. Mahan.*

Many of the world's best things have been born of affliction. The sweetest songs ever sung on earth have been called out by suffering. The richest things we inherit from the past are the purchase of suffering and sacrifice. Our

redemption comes from Gethsemane and Calvary. Whatever is purest and most valuable in life anywhere has been in the fire. Our love for one another may be strong and true in the sunny days, but it never reaches its holiest and fullest expression until pain has touched our hearts and called out the hidden treasures of affliction. Even the love of a mother for her child, deep and pure as it is, never reaches its full wondrousness of devotion and sacrifice until the child suffers, and the mother bends over it in yearning and solicitude. The same is true of all the home loves; the best and divinest qualities in them come out only in the fires. The household that has endured sorrow in the true spirit of love and faith emerges from it undestroyed, untarnished, with purer, tenderer affections, with less of passion, of selfishness, and of earthliness. J. R. M.—There are gains through loss, there are joys through sorrow, there are richest blessings through greatest trials. Only as we meet and overcome enemies, can we have the rewards of victory. Only as we learn the lessons of bereavement, can we experience the comforts of Christ's most precious ministry of consolation. Jesus loves those most tenderly who are in greatest need of His tender love; and no call on Him is surer of an instant and helpful response than the call of a crushed and trusting heart. Says a quaint religious writer: "Music is sweetest near or over rivers, where the echo thereof is best rebounded by the water. Praise for pensiveness, thanks for tears, and blessing God over the floods of affliction makes the most melodious music in the ears of heaven." H. C. T.

19. The Lord can deliver us as often as we need deliverance; in six troubles, yea, in seven. This should bear up our hearts in the multiplied returns of troubles. The Lord hath a succession of mercies for our succession of sorrows. Say not, then, We have got off this trouble, but what if another come? If another come, you have the same God, and He can give you another deliverance. *Caryl.*—*As afflictions and troubles recur, supports and deliverances shall be graciously repeated, be it never so often. In six troubles, He shall be ready to deliver thee; yea, and in seven.* This intimates that, as long as we are here in this world, we must expect a succession of troubles, that the clouds will return after the rain; after six troubles may come a seventh. After many, look for more; but *out of them all* will God *deliver* those that are His. Former deliverances are earnest of, not (as among men) excuses from further deliverances. Whatever troubles good men may be in,

there shall no evil touch them, they shall do them no real harm; the malignity of them, the sting, shall be taken out. *The evil one toucheth not* God's children (1 John 5 : 18). Being kept from sin, they are kept from the evil of every trouble. H.—God saves and delivers His people from all evil, even while they are in the midst of trouble. If God be with us, though all evils are upon us, yet no evil touches us. The presence of the Chief Good is banishment to every evil. *Caryl.*

21. The scourge of the tongue. There is a certain irony, Schlottman remarks, in the fact that Eliphaz should mention, as one of the chief evils from which his friend would be hid, that very calamity of which Job had afterward occasion to complain as his sorest affliction. *Curry.*

23. The whole of nature will be at peace with thee: the stones of the field, that they do not injure the fertility of thy fields; the wild beasts of the field, that they do not hurt thee and thy herds. *Delitzsch.*—Our covenant with God is a covenant with all the creatures, that they shall do us no hurt, but be ready to serve us and do us good.

24. *Their houses and families shall be comfortable to them.* Peace and piety in the family will make it so. "Thou shalt know and be assured that thy tabernacle is and shall be in peace; thou mayest be confident both of its present and its future prosperity." *That peace is thy tabernacle*, so the word is. Peace is the house in which *they* dwell who dwell in God and are at home in Him.

25. God has blessings in store for the seed of the faithful, which they shall have, if they do not stand in their own light and forfeit them by their folly. It is a comfort to parents to see the prosperity, especially the spiritual prosperity, of their children; if they are truly good they are truly great, how small a figure soever they make in the world. H.

It will be observed that the supreme blessing here contemplated by Eliphaz is essentially the restoration of Job's former state, the blessing of prosperity and peace and long life and numerous offspring. After such blessings Job does not seem to seek; one result of his suffering is that all other desires give way in time to the supreme longing for God's presence. It is in this longing that Job disappoints Satan and leaves his friends far behind; such pure aspiration they neither cherish nor appreciate. J. F. G.

26. Like as a shock of corn cometh in in its season. Cometh to the threshing-floor at the season of harvest. *Bishop*

Stock.—The Eastern people used not anciently to stack their corn in the straw to remain for a considerable time, as we do; but to carry it together in heaps, and then presently thresh it in the field; and they observe the same practice to this day. “As a heap of corn comes up” (on the threshing-floor, namely) “in its season”—that is, when fully ripe. *Parkhurst.*—An easy death in a good old age, a worthy and respected character, and an honorable interment, are the ideas conveyed in this rural comparison. *Scott.*—To die seasonably, as the corn is cut and housed when it is full ripe; not till then, but then not suffered to stand a day longer lest it shed. Our times are in God’s hand; it is well they are so, for He will take care that those who are His die in the best time; however their death may seem to us untimely it will be found not unseasonable. H.

“As I like a young man in whom there is something of the old, so I like an old man in whom there is something of the young,” says Cicero in his treatise on old age. Beautiful is the old age of those who are full of hope, and of the fruits of righteousness and of the blessings of peace. They have lost much, but they have gained more; the thrill of early passion is over, but the peace of God keeps guard over their heart. The glory of the morning has faded into the light of common day, but it is a day in which their sun no more goes down. *Anon.*—Death is not destruction. Death is not even decay. Death is harvesting; and the design of the harvest is the preservation of the grain. With death end all processes of tillage. No longer the plough and the pruning-knife, the driving wind and rain. Henceforth only the serenely sheltered garner. This analogy is transcendent to our experience, and therefore to our understanding. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived, the bright reality. This much only can we understand, that the risen spirit is advanced at death not simply to frames of intense rapture, but to spheres of transcendent usefulness in the kingdom of God. And as we rejoice over the value and uses of our secured harvests, so does all heaven exult, as things precious unto God, over the spirits of just men made perfect in glory. And as angel-reapers gather them and bear them upward in flaming chariots along yon highway of sapphires unto the heart and throne of the Eternal Father, heaven will open wide its joyful gates, and all the shining creatures that stand before God strike their harps to the anthem of the great harvest-home, because perfected man cometh to his end “as a shock of

corn cometh in in its season!” *Charles Wadsworth.*

27. Thus closes this beautiful picture, founded on a poetical view of God’s providence and admirably adapted to good men in prosperity. But Job had now reached a point not rare in the experience of the pious, demanding deeper insight into the mysteries of the Divine government, where all such commonplaces (see 6 : 5–7) are stale, flat, and unprofitable. *T. Lewis.*—Job is thus promised the exact reverse of all that he had experienced: a safe home, flocks untouched, a happy and prosperous family, a peaceful old age. It must have sounded like a bitter mockery, and as such he resents it. *Cook.*—The intent of this speech is very plain; it was to bring Job to a confession of some secret wickedness, some great enormity, of which his friends supposed him to be guilty. And so, we find, Job understood it; for he complains of the unkindness of the suspicion in the following reply (6 : 14, 15, 25). *Peters.*

Eliphaz is right in censuring Job’s vehement passion. He is right in so grandly asserting the sinfulness of the creature in the light of the Creator’s holiness. He is right in asserting man’s inheritance of sorrow through sin, and in insisting that his true refuge is in God’s compassion. Right, too, in saying that suffering is meant to lead him to God. But he does not see that suffering, along with its intent to awaken to sin, may carry with it the intent to purify character. He does not see that the purpose of suffering may be to *test* fidelity and to show to the sufferer himself and to men about him that neither life nor death, nor things present nor things to come can separate him from the love of God. He did not know that this was the *great* purpose of Job’s affliction. He *could* not know it, for he had not heard the discussion in the heavenly conclave on the question whether Job served God for nought. He did not see that suffering may be without any special connection with sin—sent for God’s sake rather than for man’s—even as the Psalmist says and Paul quotes: “For *Thy* sake we are killed all the day long.” *Vincent.*

The appeal to Job’s piety, as though this should quiet his sorrows, and cause him to maintain a cheerful confidence in his overwhelming distress, shows a lack of due consideration for the condition of the sufferer. Greater tenderness of manner, and a more sympathetic appreciation of Job’s sorrows, was especially needed in one who should attempt the office of comforter to one so afflicted. Eliphaz’s

assumption respecting the immediate connection in the Divine government of suffering and sin is quite too broad and unqualified. On general principles, all he assumes is true, but there is something fallacious in making the principles universally applicable, and terribly cruel in rigidly enforcing them in respect to Job's case. The general sinfulness of men may account for human sorrows so far as they are uniformly distributed; and a like principle may be applied where they are plainly graduated in proportion to the demerit of the sufferers. But special suffering, not involving special guilt, cannot be thus accounted for. A sinfulness common to all cannot be the reason why one is singled out rather than another, and made to endure extraordinary sorrows.

The special significance of suffering, there-

fore, remains unexplained. Its importance as a test of character, its value as a means of discipline and training, and the far more exceeding reward by which it shall be abundantly compensated, are not once suspected. Eliphaz alleges that man suffers because he is a sinner; he knew not that a man may likewise suffer because he is a saint; that he may thus exhibit more distinctly his saintly character; that he may be ripened still more in holiness; and that his final recompense may be proportionately increased. Suffering, to Eliphaz, was ever and only a punishment, a judgment for sin, an infliction of the Divine displeasure. He knew not that it might also be a token of love, a means of grace, a blessing in disguise; that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. W. H. G.

CHAPTER VI.

1 THEN Job answered and said,
 2 Oh that my vexation were but weighed,
 And all my calamity laid in the balances!
 3 For now it would be heavier than the sand
 of the seas:
 Therefore have my words been rash.
 4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within
 me,
 The poison whereof my spirit drinketh up:
 The terrors of God do set themselves in array
 against me.
 5 Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?
 Or loweth the ox over his fodder?
 6 Can that which hath no savour be eaten with-
 out salt?
 Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?
 7 My soul refuseth to touch *them*;
 They are as loathsome meat to me.
 8 Oh that I might have my request;
 And that God would grant *me* the thing that
 I long for!
 9 Even that it would please God to crush me;
 That he would let loose his hand, and cut
 me off!
 10 And be it still my consolation,
 Yea, let me exult in pain that spareth not,
 That I have not denied the words of the
 Holy One.
 11 What is my strength, that I should wait?
 And what is mine end, that I should be pa-
 tient?

12 Is my strength the strength of stones?
 Or is my flesh of brass?
 13 Is it not that I have no help in me,
 And that wisdom is driven quite from me?
 14 To him that is ready to faint kindness *should*
 be shewed from his friend;
 Even to him that forsaketh (or, *Else might*
 he forsake) the fear of the Almighty.
 15 My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a
 brook,
 As the channel of brooks that pass away;
 16 Which are black by reason of the ice:
 And wherein the snow hideth itself:
 17 What time they wax warm, they vanish:
 When it is hot, they are consumed out of
 their place.
 18 The caravans *that travel* by the way of them
 turn aside;
 They go up into the waste, and perish.
 19 The caravans of Tema looked,
 The companies of Sheba waited for them.
 20 They were ashamed because they had hoped;
 They came thither, and were confounded.
 21 For now ye are nothing;
 Ye see a terror, and are afraid.
 22 Did I say, Give unto me?
 Or, Offer a present for me of your sub-
 stance?
 23 Or, Deliver me from the adversary's hand?
 Or, Redeem me from the hand of the op-
 pressors?

- 24 Teach me, and I will hold my peace :
And cause me to understand wherein I have
erred.
- 25 How forcible are words of uprightness !
But what doth your arguing reprove ?
- 26 Do ye think to reprove words ?
Seeing that the speeches of one that is des-
perate are as wind.

JOB'S FIRST REPLY TO ELIPHAZ.

Chapters 6 and 7.

JOB'S reply to the first of his three friends falls into *three* great sections : First, 6 : 1-13. He defends against the remonstrances of Eliphaz the bitterness of his complaining and his despair. Second, vs. 14-30. He laments with sorrowful disappointment the attitude his friends have taken up toward him. Third, chap. 7. He falls anew into a bitter lamentation over his sorrowful destiny, and appeals against God's treatment of him in language much more direct and keen than that used in chap. 3. A. B. D.—Job excuses his impatience by the greatness of his sufferings, which his friends have not duly appreciated. He rejects the consolation offered by Eliphaz. He declares expressly that he does not expect a cure, and that a speedy death is his only desire ; he complains that his friends do not sympathize with him ; he laments the general lot of human nature, and his own in particular ; he confesses at last that he is not unjustly punished, but complains that God should so strictly observe and so rigidly punish offences that cannot injure Him. *Michaelis*.

Chap. 6. There is something very open and engaging in the character of Job as it appears in this speech. He confesses the impatience that Eliphaz found fault with, though he excuses it by the incalculable weight of his affliction (v. 2). He admits that his words have been wild, though he thinks this was but natural when a creature found himself in conflict with God (v. 4). He even suggests to his friends the worth at which to estimate his language when he says that the words of one that is desperate go into the wind (v. 26). And he goes so far as to speak of himself as losing hold of the fear of the Almighty under the trial of his calamities (v. 14). There is something simple, too, and childlike in his defence of his cry of despair by the example of the lower creatures, which also express their pain or want by cries of distress (v. 5). In keeping with this openness in regard to himself is his impatience and resentment of the covert insinuations of his

- 27 Yea, ye would cast *lots* upon the fatherless,
And make merchandise of your friend.
- 28 Now therefore he pleased to look upon me ;
For surely I shall not lie to your face.
- 29 Return, I pray you, let there be no injustice ;
Yea, return again, my cause is righteous.
- 30 Is there injustice on my tongue ?
Cannot my taste discern mischievous things ?

friends through their first spokesman. He demands that they should show him what they are hinting at by the pictures they are drawing and the blind parables they are narrating at him (v. 24) ; he himself will look them in the face and affirm his innocence (v. 28). And even the one bitter sentence which he utters against their hard-heartedness (v. 27) is quite in harmony with the honest directness of the rest of his words. A. B. D.

1-7. Job meets the arguments of Eliphaz in order. The first point which made Eliphaz doubt the integrity of Job, and on which his argument hinges, was the bitterness of spirit, the "wrath" which Job gave way to in his affliction. Job first addresses himself to this argument. *Cook*.—The "anger" that Eliphaz has deprecated Job justifies by referring to the unexplained visitation that compels it. Looking into his affliction honestly, and interpreting it according to the only data he has, as God's especial displeasure, he sees only too much reason for being profoundly disturbed and embittered in soul. J. F. G.

2. He would have his afflictions, inclusive of their distressing impressions on his mind, to be put together in one scale, and weighed against the sand on the seashore in the other scale. This is only a poetical and pathetic manner of saying that his afflictions were insupportable ; a consideration which in equitable judgment would at least excuse his intemperate complaint. *Scott*.

4. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me. This is uttered by the patient man, when he would excuse his passion by the terror and agony he was in. He had patience enough for the oppression and rapine of his enemies, for the unkindness and reproach of his friends, and for the cunning and malice of the devil ; but he was so transported with the sense of God's anger, he could not bear that with temper ; the apprehension that all these miseries, of so piercing and destroying a nature in themselves, fell upon him not only by God's permission, to try and humble him, but proceeded directly from His indignation and resolution to destroy him, almost confounded him.

Clarendon.—He saw himself charged by the terrors of God as by an army set in battle-array, and surrounded by them. God, by His terrors, fought against him ; as he had no comfort when he retired inward into his own bosom, so he had none when he looked upward toward heaven. He that used to be encouraged with the consolations of God, not only wanted those, but was amazed with the terrors of God. H.

5. Job justifies his complainings by intimating that there is a sufficient reason for them. The wild ass does not bray when it has pasture, nor does the ox low *over his fodder*, nor would I complain without a cause ; but it is not to be expected that I will be silent while either starving or feeding upon bitter or tasteless food. *Curry.*

6. Can, or do, men use to eat unsavory meats, with delight, or without complaint ? That is, Men commonly complain of their meat, when it is unsavory ; how much more, when it is so bitter as mine is ? *Poole.*

7. *My soul refuseth to touch, they are as loathsome food to me.* The translation and meaning of the first clause are clear. Job cannot accept the poison, his soul recoils from it ; the sense of the second clause is most probably, “ the evils which have come upon me are like diseased or poisonous food,” literally, as disease of my food. This means more than loathsome food—food contaminated and full of disease, food at once disgusting and unwholesome ; how, then, can I receive it without such expressions of grief, or wrath, as appear to Eliphaz proofs of sin and unpardonable folly ?

8-10. Eliphaz had represented death as the last punishment ; Job now declares that it is his only hope. This represents a critical point in the argument ; he consoles himself with one thought, that he has not sinned against God ; thus, as in all former trials, holding fast his integrity and his allegiance to God. As yet there is no indication of a hope beyond death. *Cook.*—Job had been courting death, as that which would be the happy period of his miseries (chap. 3). For this Eliphaz had gravely reproved him ; but he, instead of unsaying it, says it here again with more vehemence than before ; it is as ill said as almost anything we meet with in all his discourses, and is recorded for our admonition, not our imitation. Observe, Though Job was extremely desirous of death, and very angry at its delays, yet he did not offer to destroy himself, nor to take away his own life ; only he begged that it would *please God to destroy him*. H.—In all his sufferings Job never intimates a thought of taking his own

life. The old Hebrew mind would have spurned the effeminacy that expresses itself in the “ *Morals*” of Seneca (commending suicide in cases of hopeless afflictions). That mind was strong to bear the ills of life so long as it pleased God. In the entire Old Testament there is no trace of suicide apart from war, except in the case of the miserable Ahithophel. *J. S. Burr.*

10. The general connection is clear ; some words are difficult, but the words may be more clearly expressed, *so would it still be my comfort, and in the midst of my unsparing anguish would I exult that I have not denied*—that is, renounced, the words of the *Holy One*. This comfort was not merely that death would end his troubles, but that to the last he has the consciousness of having kept the faith. *Cook.*—I would set myself to bear the pangs and agonies of death if I had but this hope, that my misery was near expiring ; for I have the testimony of a good conscience, which tells me that I have not smothered any light which God hath sent me, but that I have been faithful to Him, His cause, and His truth. *Caryl.*—Job had the words of the Holy One committed to him. The people of God were, at that time, blessed with Divine revelation. It was his comfort that he had not concealed them, had not received the grace of God therein in vain. He had not kept them from himself, but had given them full scope to operate upon him, and in everything to guide and govern him. He had not kept them to himself, but had been ready on all occasions to communicate his knowledge for the good of others ; was never ashamed or afraid to own the Word of God to be his rule, nor remiss in his endeavors to bring others into an acquaintance with it. Those, and those only, may promise themselves comfort in death who are good and do good while they live.

11, 12. He justifies himself in this extreme desire of death, from the deplorable condition he was now in. Disconsolate spirits will reason strangely against themselves. *Is my strength the strength of stones ?* Are my muscles brass and sinews steel ? No, they are not, and therefore I cannot hold out always in this pain and misery, but must needs sink under the load. Had I strength to grapple with my distemper, I might hope to look through it ; but, alas ! I have not. H.—This note of self-distrust, as Job looks forward to a life of pain, deepens our sense of his heroic loyalty. To be patient without any outlook, to endure without Divine support—Job does not promise it, and he trembles at the prospect ; but none the less he sets his feet on the toilsome way. J. F. G.

14-30. Job, having thus briefly disposed of the arguments urged by Eliphaz, takes up another position, and attacks his friends, first for their neglect of the first duty of friends, compassion for the afflicted (14-21); and then for their failure in argument, accompanied by injustice and cruelty, which involve far deeper guilt than idle and hasty words wrung from a sufferer.

14. To him. This expresses the sense of the Hebrew, though not the full force of the words or the conciseness of the phrase, "To the afflicted from his friend pity;" the latter clause means either "should he forsake the fear of the Almighty," or "lest he forsake." This gives a satisfactory sense; friends should above all things soothe a man's feelings lest he be driven to desperation. The word for afflicted is very graphic, "melted down," "dissolved," alluding, it may be, to the effect of the poisoned arrows (v. 4). *Cook.*—Surely those have no fear of the rod of God upon themselves who have no compassion for those who feel the smart of it. Troubles are the trials of friendship. When a man is afflicted, he will see who are his friends indeed, and who are but pretenders; for a brother is born for adversity. H. —Human sympathy is a great help in keeping alive a sufferer's trust in God. God ministers His own pity often through His servants. It is a Christian truth, illustrated by the highest and most sacred relations; for surely we are encouraged to trust in God's pity when we remember how the human Christ was and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We may, by hardness or lack of sympathy for one in sorrow, alienate him not only from *us*, but from God. V.

15-21. More sorrowful to him than any cold, critical words which they have uttered is the feeling that his friends have taken up such a position against him. This was what he had not looked for. And his disappointment is like that of the thirsty caravan that finds the long-looked-for waters dried up in the heat. Every emotion seems now to find a place in Job's mind in succession. First, his disappointment, expressed in this beautiful figure, is mixed with the feeling how unworthy his friends' conduct was. They had not acted to him as men do to one who is, as he describes himself, "despairing" and "losing hold of the fear of the Almighty." Kindness is due to such a one, but they had turned against him from sheer feebleness of spirit, because they saw that his calamity was from God. A. B. D.—The imagery of this passage is taken from a land intersected by

ravines, deep wadys dry in summer, and filled suddenly after storms by torrents from neighboring heights. This corresponds most exactly with the descriptions of the Hauran, in which there is no river flowing through the summer; whereas in winter torrents rush with great impetuosity through cavernous ravines from the Jebel Hauran.

15. The channel of brooks. The former word denotes the deep wady or ravine through which the brook or torrent rushes, often with much noise and vehemence, soon passing away, and leaving only a heap of shingle. The simile is remarkably complete: when little needed the torrent overflows, when reeded it disappears; in winter it does not fertilize, in summer it is dried up; nor is it merely useless; it deceives, alluring the traveller by the appearance of verdure, promising refreshment and giving none. Such were the friends of Job with their noisy grief and vehement gesticulations, and the absence of genuine sympathy. *Cook.*

21. For now ye are nothing. Job at length applies the similitude to his friends. Ye are now nothing; ye are of no service in assuaging my affliction; ye have deceived even the lowest expectation of relief, as a torrent, whose waters have passed away, frustrates the hopes of a thirsty traveller. *Rosenmüller.*

It is from this view of friendship that the way begins to diverge by which Job arrives in time to a point wholly opposite to theirs, where he is fully fixed by faith on God. That God has afflicted him is no reason why friendship should be withdrawn; rather he needs friends the more as he feels himself slipping away from his old moorings in God. He desires simply that their natural affection remain undisturbed by what they see of his disease, and be kept faithful to his essential righteousness. J. F. G.

22, 23. His mixed sadness and contempt passes into sarcasm when he tells them that he could have understood their fear if he had asked anything from them—even one's friends must not be put under that strain—but he sought only sympathy. A. B. D.—A bitter irony, implying that he might have been foolish had he counted upon substantial help, but that it was impossible to foresee that his friends would withhold the simple boon of pity, costing neither money nor exertion.

24, 25. Job demands that since his friends have neither helped nor comforted him, they should at least convince him of error, pointing out in what his assumed guilt consisted. Eliphaz had inferred his folly, or sin, from the fact

of his wrath. (See 5 : 2.) With that accusation Job has already dealt, and now calls for more substantial reasons. *Cook*.—If, instead of invidious reflections and uncharitable insinuations, you will give me plain instructions and solid arguments, which shall carry their own evidence along with them, I am ready to acknowledge my error, and own myself in a fault ; *Teach me, and I will hold my tongue*, for I have often found with pleasure and wonder *how forcible right words are* ; but the method you take will never make proselytes ; *what doth your arguing reprove* ? Your hypothesis is false, your surmises are groundless, your management weak, and your application peevish and uncharitable. H.

26. Is it your object merely to reprove my words ? The next clause should be rendered, *but the words of the despairing are for the wind*. Words wrung from a man in such a condition had, as Job would argue, no bearing upon the question of his guilt ; they followed, and could not therefore have provoked the visitation, and were after all merely uttered to the wind, borne away by it and leaving no trace, at the worst idle and meaningless. *Cook*.

27. A strong invective against their unfeeling behavior. The words are severe ; the preceding passage, however, in which their refusal of sympathy (vs. 22, 23) and their petty fault-finding with Job's language (vs. 25, 26) are referred to, naturally leads up to the idea. The same phrase, *to cast lots*, occurs 1 Sam. 14 : 42, and the phrase *bargain over*, or make merchandise of, occurs again (Job 41 : 6), "Will the partners bargain over him ?" The "fatherless" is probably the child of the debtor. After his death the ruthless creditors cast lots for possession of the child as a slave. A. B. D.

28. Look upon me. A still closer chal-

lenge. Look me in the face, and detect my falsehood, if you can. To propose such a test is itself a strong presumption of conscious innocence, of which the continued importunity of the next sentence is a still stronger proof. However far wrong he may be before God, in the sight of all men he knew his cause was just, and that his sufferings were not inflicted upon him by reason of his exceptional wickedness. His own conscience, his moral sense, which tries actions as the palate tries mischievous things, acquits him of iniquity. *Curry*.—Though he had let fall some passionate expressions, yet, in the main, he was in the right, and his afflictions, though very extraordinary, did not prove him to be a hypocrite or a wicked man. His righteousness he holds fast, and will not let it go. H.

29, 30. Bethink yourselves of the wrong you have done me, and repent of it. Let me not be charged with sin and hypocrisy for what I have said. Think again, and better of it. Upon further consideration the righteousness of my cause and person will fully appear to you. *Clark*.—See whether I utter anything that is false ; and whether I possess not a sound judgment to distinguish between right and wrong. *Rosenmüller*.

My taste, literally *my palate*, meaning here, not the æsthetic sense that we associate with taste, but spiritual sense and insight. Job avers that his spiritual sense is not blunted ; that when he says he is righteous it is from a real discernment, as keen and true as it ever was, of good and evil. Both Job and the friends recognize that one's spiritual discernment of truth may be impaired or destroyed, so that evil and good may cease to appear in their real guise ; and Job is evidently solicitous to keep this fine sense intact in all his affliction. J. F. G.

CHAPTER VII.

- 1 Is there not a warfare to man upon earth ?
And are not his days like the days of an hireling ?
- 2 As a servant that earnestly desireth the shadow,
And as an hireling that looketh for his wages :
- 3 So am I made to possess months of vanity,
And wearisome nights are appointed to me.
- 4 When I lie down, I say,

- When shall I arise and the night be gone ?
And I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day.
- 5 My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust ;
My skin closeth up and breaketh out afresh.
- 6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
And are spent without hope.
- 7 Oh remember that my life is a breath :
Mine eye shall no more see good.

- 8 The eye of him that seeth me shall behold me no more :
Thine eyes shall be upon me, but I shall not be.
- 9 As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away,
So he that goeth down to Sheol shall come up no more.
- 10 He shall return no more to his house,
Neither shall his place know him any more.
- 11 Therefore I will not refrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
- 12 Am I a sea, or a sea-monster,
That thou settest a watch over me ?
- 13 When I say, My bed shall comfort me,
My couch shall ease my complaint;
- 14 Then thou scarest me with dreams,
And terrifiest me through visions :
- 15 So that my soul chooseth strangling,
And death rather than *these* my bones.
- 16 I loathe *my life* ; I would not live alway :
Let me alone ; for my days are vanity.
- 17 What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him,
And that thou shouldest set thy mind upon him,
- 18 And that thou shouldest visit him every morning,
And try him every moment ?
- 19 How long wilt thou not look away from me,
Nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle ?
- 20 If I have sinned, what do I unto thee, O thou watcher of men ?
Why hast thou set me as a mark for thee,
So that I am a burden to myself ?
- 21 And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity ?
For now shall I lie down in the dust ;
And thou shalt seek me diligently, but I shall not be.

IN this chapter Job's mind begins to turn from the cruelty of his friends to the larger aspects of his sorrow ; and his words take on the character of a soliloquy. When his words run into appeal or address it is no longer to the friends, but to God. V.

Renewed outburst of despair at the thought of his sorrowful destiny. With a deeper pathos than any that had gone before, this innocence of his and this capacity to form true moral judgments regarding his history being his starting-point, Job turns to the broad world to contemplate how helpless man is with these qualities against that fated, inexorable misery called human life. His view is general, though he himself is the centre of it, and his own history gives color to that of man. He speaks out of the agony of suffering and from the abjectness of his own whole condition, and contrasts these with the natural greatness of the Being who has plunged him into them. It is the physical claim of sentient life which he urges, not to be tortured on any grounds whatsoever they be. A. B. D.

This chapter marks another stage in the development of Job's innermost feelings. In the first part (1-10), he repudiates altogether the hope of a possible restoration to life, and claims the right of unqualified complaining. In the latter part (11-21) he enters into direct expostulation with God. In all this he still keeps clear from the sin of renouncing God ; so far the temptation completely fails ; but he incurs the very serious reproach of arraigning His government. This distinction must be borne in mind

throughout. Job is faulty, and "darkens counsel by words without knowledge," but his fault is that of a man who fears and loves God, yet cannot understand His ways. *Cook*.—The pathetic lament of Job does not argue a spirit of impatience or of complaint against God ; it is the weakness of the flesh first expostulating with the harsh judgment of his friends upon his longing for death, and then appealing to the Almighty to send him the relief that he hoped for in the future state. He had borne with a majestic patience the sudden loss of all earthly good ; but this protracted suffering from a disease that caused him to loathe himself had so far exhausted his nervous vitality and the spirit of hope, that even the instinct of life had died out within him. Never was a picture more true than this of the weariness of a prolonged and seemingly incurable sickness, which leaves no hope of life, yet does not bring the relief of death. In such a condition it is not wrong to wish to die. Yet Job humbled himself before God, and acknowledged his sinfulness and ill-desert, and did not murmur under the chastening hand of the Preserver of men. J. P. T.

1. Job argues that since life is bounded within certain limits, with its appointed work, when these limits are reached and the work is done a man may be justified in longing for the rest of the grave. This position at once meets the argument of Eliphaz, and supplies a basis for the following expostulation. *Cook*.

1, 2. How pathetic is the touch which gives character to this description—the slave panting for the shades of evening, which may bring him

rest from his toil ; the hired soldier, who looks for his wages not so much from greed as from the fact that the time of payment is the time of release and rest. Such, says Job, am I. V.—Man's life is a *warfare*, and *as the days of a hireling*. We are every one of us to look upon ourselves in this world (1) as soldiers, exposed to hardship and in the midst of enemies ; we must serve and be under command ; and, when our warfare is accomplished, we must be disbanded, dismissed with either shame or honor, according to what we have done in the body. (2) As day-laborers, that have the work of the day to do in its day, and must make up their account at night. Job had as much reason, he thought, to wish for death, as a poor servant or hireling that is tired of his work has to wish for the shadows of the evening, when he shall receive his penny and go to rest. The darkness of the night is as welcome to the laborer as the light of the morning is to the watchman. H.

3. But there is this difference, that the hireling in the midst of all his toils can look forward with assured confidence to the precise hour at which they will close, and when his wages will be given to him. But Job knows not the appointed time for his release. Death seems his only refuge, it is his only hope ; and although he knows that it must come at last, he knows not when. Meanwhile he says : “ Months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.” In the last clause, respecting the “ wearisome nights,” there is an apparent transition from the greater to the lesser sense of the comparison. The nights, which bring sound and healthful rest to the hireling, are to Job more wearisome and full of seeming horrors than even the day. This was one of the symptoms of his disease. But apart from this, every one knows that under mental trial the nights are far more terrible than the days. The mind no less than the body lies loose and relaxed ; and all the avenues of the soul are open to receive those impressions of grief, horror and despair against which the guarded mind might be able to stand up. Hence it is that Job and other sacred poets speak so much of the terrors of the night ; and that the Psalmist, especially, so often dwells upon the blessedness of filling the mind with thoughts of God and of His loving-kindness when we lie down upon our beds. *Kitto*.

5. This verse gives an exact description of the symptoms of the disease. Maggots breed rapidly in the mouldering flesh ; clods, as it were, of earth are formed by the dry, swollen skin, rough as the hide of the elephant, which gives the name to the malady. When fully

formed the lumps burst, the skin falls off in masses, and the body is covered by virulent discharge. Such symptoms, presented incidentally, and without consciousness on the part of the speaker that he is supplying materials for the diagnosis of his disease, do not belong to fiction ; they bear the impress of living truth. *Cook*.

6. He compares his life to a web : the days which composed it are the threads ; the work is God's, who determines the measure of every man's life ; retrospection on time that is passed away makes it appear, to a man in misery, very swift, and past happiness as nothing. His days seemed now to him to have gone off faster than a manufacture of the loom. *Scott*.—Our days are like a weaver's shuttle, thrown from one side of the web to the other in the twinkling of an eye, and then back again, to and fro, until at length it is quite exhausted of the thread it carried ; and then we *cut off, like a weaver, our life* (Isa. 38 : 12). Time hastens on apace, the motion of it cannot be stopped, and when it is past it cannot be recalled. While we are living we are weaving ; every day, like the shuttle, leaves a thread behind it ; many weave the spider's web, which will fail them (8 : 14). If we are weaving to ourselves holy garments and robes of righteousness, we shall have the benefit of them when our work comes to be reviewed, and every man shall reap as he sowed and wear as he wove. H.

Without hope. That is Job's present feeling. The question remains, whether the truth of a future vindication will reveal itself in the conflict of a soul conscious of integrity and devotion to God, but in misery hopeless, so far as this life is concerned. In the actual state of Job's mind he can as yet wish for nothing but death. *Cook*.

8. In the representation of the hopelessness of a return from the underworld, the most touching feature is v. 8—that there neither the eye of any man would see him again, nor would even God Himself, if He would, as Job continues firmly to believe, at some time in the future (alas ! too late) judge his cause, and on that account seek for him—seek for him among the living, other than in vain ! Hence, too, the language of the second part of the verse is particularly agitated. *Ewald*.

9. **Sheol.** The Hebrew word designating the unseen abode of the dead ; a neutral word presupposing neither misery nor happiness, and not infrequently used much as we use the words “ the grave,” to denote the final undefined resting-place of all. J. F. G.—Man gone into the invisible world, never to return hither, is the sub-

ject of the comparison ; the thing to which he is in this regard compared is a cloud that is vanished ; unsubstantial in its composition, transient in its duration, it disappears and is nevermore seen. *Scott.*

10. What he saith is not a denial of a dying man's resurrection to life, but of his restitution to such life as he parted with at the grave's mouth. They who die a natural death do not live a natural life again ; therefore he addeth in the next verse, *he shall return no more to his house.* He shall have no more to do with this world, with worldly businesses or contentments, with the labors or comforts of the creature, or of his family ; he shall return *no more to his house.* *Neither shall his place know him any more.* When a man lives and comes home to his house, his house (as it were) welcomes him home, and his place is glad to entertain him. As in the Psalm the little hills are said to rejoice at the showers, so when a man comes home, his house and all he hath have, as it were, a tongue to bid him welcome and open arms to receive and embrace him ; but when he dies he shall return no more, and then his place shall know him (that is, receive him) no more. *Caryl.*

11. Job heaps image upon image to set before himself and the eye of God the brevity of life, the weaver's shuttle (v. 6), the wind (v. 7), the morning cloud (v. 9), ending with a pathetic reference to his home, which shall see him no more (v. 10). These regrets altogether overmaster him, and, combining with his sense of the wrong which he suffers and his impatience of the iron restraints of human existence, hurry him forward, and he resolves to open the flood-gates to the full stream of his complaint (v. 11) : *Therefore I will not refrain my mouth—i.e., therefore I also, I on my side, will not refrain.* A. B. D.

12. Now we see Job at his worst. He gives way to bitter indignation against God. The burden of his complaint is that God acts as a spy upon him, as though he were a rebellious wretch plotting against God's government and needing to be kept constantly under guard. He is utterly without defence in his charges against God, in his bitter, defiant tone, and his presumptuous impugning of God's justice and love. V. —And these harsh and presumptuous speeches against God are accompanied by no qualifications or partial retractions, such as we find in nearly all the lamentations of the Psalmist and of the Prophet Jeremiah, where they make use of similar expressions, and represent God now by this and now by that figurative expression as their unsparing persecutor, and their stern, un-

pitying Judge. Job persists in all that he says in this direction of a doubtful character ; he takes nothing back ; he concludes his discourse immediately after the most passionate and presumptuous of these sayings has passed from his lips. *Zöckler.*—It is not Job's *peculiar* sin that he thinks God has changed to an enemy against him ; that is the view that comes from his vision being beclouded by the conflict through which he is passing, as is frequently the case in the Psalms. His sin does not even consist in the inquiries, *How long ? and Wherefore ?* The Psalms, in that case, would abound in sin. But the sin is, *that he hangs on to these doubting questions, and thus attributes apparent mercilessness and injustice to God.* And the friends constantly urge him on still deeper in this sin the more persistently they attribute his sufferings to his own unrighteousness. Jeremiah (Lam. 3), after similar complaints, adds : “ Then I repeated this to my heart, and took courage from it ; the mercies of Jehovah they have no end ; His compassions do not cease.” Many of the Psalms that begin sorrowfully end in the same way ; faith at length breaks through the clouds of doubt. *Delitzsch.*

13-16. He is keenly and violently plagued by God ; yea, does not even find rest in sleep—is absolutely weak and harmless. Rather than continue to carry about this wretched skeleton, this body which has been reduced to “ bones” (see 19 : 20), he would prefer strangling or death in any form. This body (life) he despises (9 : 21), he has already lived too long ; and, therefore, at last the wild demand escapes him that God may at least now grant him a moment's rest, as in any case his life is already forfeited and he has no desire to retain it. *Ewald.*—Doubtless this was Job's infirmity, for though a good man would not wish to live alway in this world, and would choose strangling and death rather than sin, as the martyrs did, yet he will be content to live as long as pleases God, not choose them rather than life, because life is our opportunity of glorifying God and getting ready for heaven. H.

16. Life should be considered by the Christian as a possession greatly to be cherished. To esteem lightly and wish to abridge life is wrong. The desire to be with Christ—the attractive end of the magnet—cannot be too strong ; but the weariness of this world, the longing to escape from it—the repulsive end—may easily run into excess. The present state of existence is the only one in which we shall ever glorify God by patience and the resistance of evil, or, as far as we know, by extending His kingdom upon

earth. And therefore let us not be in haste to quit the field ; for it may be the only field we shall ever have where we can glorify God for these high ends. To the majority of people, however, the danger lies on the other side. They are unwilling to die. Notwithstanding all warnings and preparations which God is sending every day, the real spirit of their mind is, "I would live alway." It is because they are so encased and absorbed with the present life that they have no room for another. When our sins are once cancelled, our nature spiritualized, ourselves "meetened for the inheritance of the saints in light," who would not say, with the patriarch, "I would not live alway" ? We know and are sure that another life is awaiting us, to which this life is but as death ; and our arms stretch out to that life. "We would not live alway." J. V.

17. David's "What is man, that Thou shouldst think of him to bless him?" is turned into "What is man, that Thou shouldst think of him to curse him?" A. B. D.—This same question is asked by the Psalmist (8 : 4) with adoring wonder at the Divine condescension ; here with bitter complaint that, perishable as man is, he is possessed with ceaseless sufferings, for which cause he had become an object of terror ; and he now asks only the poor boon of being let alone. *Curry.*—**Magnify him.** There is a bitter irony in this expression ; that God should concern Himself so long, busy Himself, so to speak, with His creatures, implies in them a Titanic grandeur, so to speak, a relation of proportion, if not equality, between Him and them. In the eighth Psalm God is said to magnify man by rich endowments of soul and body, here by the infliction of tortures, which imply godlike capacities of endurance. *Cook.*

18. Try him every moment ? The question expresses one of the first of those great mysteries which the stern reality of trouble had forced on his thoughts. It was no curious inquiry on his part ; it was not a question which he could be content to leave unanswered ; it was one which the agony of his life had compelled him to meet. Every earthly hope had been wrecked, all the charm of life had faded, his very friends had proved unkind in the hours when he most needed their sympathy. And, still more, he had no peace in his own soul, for by day dark doubts respecting God perplexed him, and at night those doubts haunted him in dreams. It was not strange that he should

choose death rather than life, and pray for the time when he should enter that region where the "wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." And then arose the mysterious question, Why did God prolong his life ? To live amid the desolation of his great sorrow, and struggling with awful doubts, was a constant trial, and why did God thus "try him every moment" by keeping him alive ? *E. Hull.*

19. *Till I swallow down.* A proverbial expression, common in Arabic, for a moment of time, equivalent to "the twinkling of an eye." It may be here suggested by the feeling of suffocation, the distressing gasping of the diseased throat in elephantiasis.

20, 21. The last objection is dealt with here—"I have sinned"—that is, granted that I have committed some sin, what then ? Is it in my power now to make any compensation, to live and act for God's service ?

20. O Thou preserver of men. There is in this a touching appeal. Job does but contrast what he now experiences with what he believes and knows of God's providential goodness and care of His creatures. *Cook.*

21. Job seems to claim pardon almost indignantly, as if it were a right. Even the God who will by no means acquit may be called on for pardon ; and much more when the sin is below consciousness, not to be merciful is not to be just. *For now I shall sleep in the dust ;* this, after all, is what makes Job's inquiries and expostulations so natural. So near death as he is, the logic of his case demands pardon ; for what is the significance of torturing by pain a life so soon to go out ? The thought of a life beyond has not risen to Job's mind out of this enigma. J. F. G.

In one very important point he and his friends were agreed ; both alike falsely regarded his afflictions as indications of God's displeasure ; they at once concluding that his refusal to submit proved radical unsoundness, while he is driven to utter perplexity and hopelessness. The solution of the problem involved two conditions, one of which was as yet beyond the reach of either party ; first, the certainty that all punishments falling on God's true servants are directed by His wisdom and controlled by His power ; and, secondly, the knowledge of a future state, in which the living Redeemer will rectify all inequalities. Each step in the discussion brings the necessity of such a solution nearer. *Cook.*

CHAPTER VIII.

- 1 THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
 2 How long wilt thou speak these things?
 And *how long* shall the words of thy mouth
 be *like* a mighty wind?
 3 Doth God pervert judgment?
 Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?
 4 If thy children have sinned against him,
 And he have delivered them into the hand of
 their transgression:
 5 If thou wouldest seek diligently unto God,
 And make thy supplication to the Almighty;
 6 If thou wert pure and upright;
 Surely now he would awake for thee,
 And make the habitation of thy righteousness
 prosperous.
 7 And though thy beginning was small,
 Yet thy latter end should greatly increase.
 8 For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age,
 And apply thyself to that which their fathers
 have searched out:
 9 (For we are but of yesterday, and know
 nothing,
 Because our days upon earth are a shadow:)
 10 Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee,
 And utter words out of their heart?
 11 Can the rush grow up without mire?
 Can the flag grow without water?
 12 Whilst it is yet in its greenness, *and* not cut
 down,
 It withereth before any *other* herb.
 13 So are the paths of all that forget God;
 And the hope of the godless man shall perish:
 14 Whose confidence shall break in sunder,
 And whose trust is a spider's web.
 15 He shall lean upon his house, but it shall
 not stand:
 He shall hold fast thereby, but it shall not
 endure.
 16 He is green before the sun,
 And his shoots go forth over his garden.
 17 His roots are wrapped about the heap,
 He beholdeth the place of stones.
 18 If he be destroyed from his place,
 Then it shall deny him, *saying*, I have not
 seen thee.
 19 Behold, this is the joy of his way.
 And out of the earth shall others spring.
 20 Behold, God will not cast away a perfect
 man,
 Neither will he uphold the evil doers.
 21 He will yet fill thy mouth with laughter,
 And thy lips with shouting.
 22 They that hate thee shall be clothed with
 shame;
 And the tent of the wicked shall be no more.

FIRST SPEECH OF BILDAD.

Chapter 8.

BILDAD the Shuhite now comes forward to rebuke his fallen friend, and to vindicate, as he supposes, the ways of God. "There is," as Chalmers remarks, "sound general truth in Bildad's affirmation respecting the dealings of God with the upright and the evil;" but the application of this "general truth" to Job in particular is his fault, and is unauthorized by anything he knew or could charitably conjecture. *Kitto*.—Bildad infers from the justice of God that chastisement implies guilt, and that one is as surely the consequence of the other as effects in the natural world are inseparable from their causes. This position, he says, was not a discovery of yesterday; it had been uniformly maintained by wise men through all ages past. Job, therefore, must have been guilty. His children had perished because they acknowledged not their sins; but Job might yet be restored, if he confessed his evil doings and asked pardon for them. *Bishop Stock*.—Stung by

Job's reproaches, but unmoved by his distress and regardless of his protestations, this respondent calls the whole a storm of passion. With this spirit he enters upon his answer, wherein he supports the principle of Eliphaz, that all sufferings are punishments, and necessarily imply preceding guilt. He advances, in defence of that position, two arguments: the first is taken from the justice of God, the other from the sentiments of the ancient sages. These are the outlines of his short discourse. *Scott*.

The argument of Bildad the Shuhite rests upon the same principle as that of Eliphaz, but it touches more forcibly upon some points briefly indicated in the previous discourse, and the illustrations are novel and striking. There is vigor as well as ingenuity in the reasoning. Bildad feels aggrieved by Job's complaints, which involve the charge of injustice in God (vs. 2, 3) and, admitting hypothetically the possibility of the Patriarch's righteousness, he infers the guilt of his children who had perished, and the certainty of his own restoration to happiness (vs. 4-7). In order to maintain the general principle that God

never abandons the righteous or gives permanent prosperity to evil-doers, he adduces the authority of ancient and universal tradition, and quotes three similes, or proverbial sayings, of singular beauty. The discourse winds up with an assurance that, notwithstanding Job's belief that he "should no more see good," he would still be happy as well as prosperous, supposing that his confident assertions of integrity and piety are well founded. *Cook.*

2, 3. We thought Job spake a great deal of good sense and much to the purpose, and that he had reason and right on his side ; but Bildad, like an eager, angry disputant, turns it all off with this, *How long wilt thou speak these things?* taking it for granted that Eliphaz had said enough to silence him, and that therefore all he said was impertinent. Thus reproofs are often grounded upon mistakes. Men's meaning is not taken aright, and then they are gravely rebuked as if they were evil-doers. Bildad compares Job's discourse to a *strong wind*. Job had excused himself with this, that *his speeches* were but *as wind* (6 : 26), and therefore they should not make such ado about them. "Yea, but," says Bildad, "they are as a strong wind, blustering and threatening, boisterous and dangerous, and therefore we are concerned to fence against them." He justifies God in what He had done. This he had no occasion to do at this time, for Job did not condemn God ; and this he might have done without reflecting upon Job's children, as he does here. Could not he be an advocate for God, but he must be an accuser of his brethren ?

3, 4. Job readily owned that God did not pervert judgment ; and yet it did not therefore follow either that his children were castaways, or that they died for some great transgression. It is true that we and our children have sinned against God, and we ought to justify Him in all He brings upon us and ours ; but extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces ; and, in our judgment of another's case (unless the contrary appears), we ought to take the more favorable side, as our Saviour directs (Luke 13 : 2, 4). Here Bildad missed it. *H.*

More probably v. 4 is complete in itself : *If thy children have sinned, so (or, then) he hath,* etc. The idea is that evil carries its own retribution with it, and that a sinner is destroyed by the very sin which he commits—a common idea in the book. Though Bildad puts his reference to the children of Job hypothetically, there is great harshness in the allusion, and we may un-

derstand how the father would smart under it from his own reference later in the book to the time when his children were yet alive : "When my children were about me." A wiser and more human-hearted Teacher than Bildad has instructed us, from the instances of the affliction of blindness and the accident in the Tower of Siloam, that calamity is no proof of guilt in those on whom it falls, and that evil may serve in the hand of God wider uses than the chastisement of individuals. This is the very lesson of the Book of Job. *A. B. D.*

5-7. This very accurately describes both Job's attitude toward God and what afterward befell him ; only it contemplates Job's approach to God as a return from sin and rebellion rather than as the hunger of an unselfishly righteous heart. We see through it all the irreconcilable difference between the friends' point of view and Job's ; the friends reasoning that Job is a leper, and therefore, of course, a sinner ; Job asserting, I am a righteous man, and my leprosy is a mystery that I cannot penetrate. Observe that Bildad, like Eliphaz, sets before Job merely a promise of reinstatement, restoration to worldly prosperity. This is all that the friends contemplate, and is their measure of blessing. Job's ideal is much higher, being measured by nothing short of God's presence. *J. F. G.*

8. Blessed be God, now that we have the word of God in writing, and are directed to search that, we need not inquire of the former age, nor prepare ourselves to the search of their fathers ; for the Word of God in the Scripture is as nigh us as them, and it is the more sure Word of prophecy to which we must take heed. If we study and keep God's precepts, we may by them *understand more than the ancients* (Psalm 119 : 99, 100). *H.*

9. *The recency of man.* In the distant past not a trace of man's presence has been found. He is *of yesterday*. While the stone volume has preserved for us the slight impressions of the annelid and the foot-trail of perished mollusks in the soft mud over which they crawled ; while it has restored to us in perfect shape the delicately constructed, many-lensed eye of the trilobite, and has kept exact record of the death struggles of fishes on the sands of olden seas ; while it has delineated on carboniferous columns fern-leaves exquisitely delicate in structure as the finest species of modern times ; and while the rain-drops of long bygone ages have left imprints which reveal to us the course which even the wind followed, not a trace of man is visible. Only at the close does he appear ; science finds him where the Scriptures placed him,

and sees in him the crown which continuous type had long foreshadowed. *W. Fraser.*—No fact of science is more certainly established than the recency of man in geological time. Not only do we find no trace of his remains in the older geological formations, but we find no remains even of the animals nearest to him; and the conditions of the world in those periods seem to unfit it for the residence of man. If, following the usual geological system, we divide the whole history of the earth into four great periods, extending from the oldest rocks known to us—the Eozoic, or Archean—up to the modern, we find remains of man, or his works, only in the latest of the four, and in the later part of it. In point of fact, there is no indisputable proof of the presence of man until we reach the early modern period. The absolute date of the first appearance of man cannot, perhaps, be fixed within a few years or centuries, either by the biblical chronology or by the science of the earth. It would seem, however, that the Bible limits us to two or three thousand years before the deluge of Noah, while some estimates of the antiquity of man, based on physical changes or ancient history, or on philology, greatly exceed this limit. If the earliest men were those of the river gravels and caves, men of the “mammoth age,” or of the “palæolithic” or palæocosmic period, we can form some definite ideas as to their possible antiquity. They colonized the continents immediately after the elevation of the land from the great subsidence which closed the pleistocene or glacial period, in what has been called the “continental” period of the post-glacial age, because the new lands then raised out of the sea exceeded in extent those which we have now. We have some measures of the date of this great continental elevation. Many years ago, Sir Charles Lyell used the recession of the falls of Niagara as a chronometer. Estimating their cutting power as equal to one foot per annum, he calculated that the beginning of the process which dates from the post-glacial elevation was about thirty thousand years ago. More recent surveys have, however, shown that the rate is three times as great as that estimated by Lyell, and also that it is probable that a considerable part of the gorge was merely cleaned out by the river since the pleistocene age. In this way the age of the Niagara gorge becomes reduced to perhaps seven or eight thousand years. Other indicators of similar bearing are found both in Europe and America, and lead to the belief that it is physically impossible that man could have colonized the northern hemisphere at an earlier date. These facts render

necessary an entire revision of the calculations on the growth of stalagmite in caves, and other uncertain data, which have been held to indicate a greater lapse of time. The value of the demands made on other grounds is uncertain and fluctuating. Egyptian chronology is constantly varying as new discoveries are made. Anthropology cannot precisely measure the rapidity of variation in the infancy of mankind, and Hale has recently shown that American facts respecting language prove that it may vary much more rapidly than has heretofore been supposed. It is further to be observed that these demands for long time relate to the post-diluvian period, about which there is a consensus of historical evidences limiting it to at most 3000 B.C., and that there is no geological evidence of any considerable change, either physical or vital, within that time. It is true that announcements have been made from time to time of the discovery of remains indicating the existence of man in deposits as old as the miocene period; but these alleged facts have broken down on investigation, so that no certainty can be attached to them. Nor have we discovered in the tertiary formations older than the modern or later pleistocene any animals nearly related to man which might be regarded as his precursors. To this recency of man we have to add the further fact that the earliest known men are still members of the human species, not exceeding in their variation the limits presented by the various races of men in the present day. Nor do the bones or the works of the earliest men present any approximation to those of lower animals. In physical development and cranial capacity, the oldest men are on a par with those who have succeeded them, and, in some respects, superior to the average. There is, however, evidence of the contemporaneous existence of very rude and savage tribes with others of higher culture and development, which is also affirmed of the antediluvians in Genesis. *J. W. Dawson.*

10. Words out of their heart.

Words, not the result of hasty and superficial generalizing, but of an experience which the lengthened lives of these men had enabled them to pass through, and the principles learned in which had sunk into their heart. The “heart” is in Hebrew the deepest part of human nature, whether intellect or feeling.

11-13. The moral maxims of the ancient time are thrown into gorgeous similes drawn from the rank and luxuriant vegetation of the swamps and river brakes of the semi-tropical East. The downfall of the wicked when God

turns away from him is as rapid and complete as the sinking and withering of the stately reed when water is withdrawn from it. A. B. D.

13. The correct translation, "godless man," for "hypocrite," is important. So 13 : 16 ; 20 : 5 ; 27 : 8 ; 34 : 30 ; 36 : 13. It is unquestionable that in all these places there is no reference to hypocrisy. *De Witt.*

14. Like the spider, the self-righteous man weaves his web, his hope, his trust, out of his own bowels. It is the creature of his fancy, spun from the materials of self-righteousness. He may call it a garment to hide his shame, but it is a mere web, unfit to cover a naked soul, and easily rent. He may call it a house, but it is unavailable to "hide from the storm, or cover from the tempest." He may hold fast by it, but it shall fall, and he perish in the ruins. There is, there can be, no shelter, safety, nor security in the cobweb of self-righteousness. If not stripped off in the world, it will be swept away by the first breath of eternity. *Anon.*

15. What more beautiful than those threads thrown from branch to branch of the golden gorse—an aerial bridge—all gemmed with diamonds of morning dew ? But would any man in his senses trust his weight to it ? Equally insecure are the hopes of the unbelieving and ungodly, "whose hope," to use the words of Job, "shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand ; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure." *Guthrie.*—His vain confidence will easily and certainly be swept away, as the cobweb with the besom, when God shall come to purge his house. The prosperity of worldly people will fail them when they expect to find safety and happiness in it. *When a wicked man dies, his expectation perishes.* The ground of his hopes will prove false ; he will be disappointed of the thing he hoped for, and his foolish hope, with which he buoyed himself up, will be turned into endless despair ; and thus his hope will be cut off, his web, that refuge of lies, swept away, and he crushed in it. II.

16-18. The godless man was first compared to a rush, secondly to a spider's web, but now to a plant or tree. This third similitude puts him in the fairest posture that can be imagined, and yet all proves nought ; his branches shall be cut down, and his root stubbed up. *Caryl.*—The profession and the power of godliness differ, as leaves on a tree and good fruit ; a tree that hath fruit will usually have leaves ; a man that hath the power will usually have a form of godliness ; but as some trees, as the ivy, are

never without leaves, yet never bear good fruit while they live, so many profess Christ all their days who never bring forth fruit worthy of repentance and amendment of life. Some defy the devil with their lips who deify him in their lives. *Swinnock.*

They have the semblance of godliness, but not the substance ; they have the lineaments of godliness, but not the life ; they have the face of godliness, but not the heart ; they have the form, but not the power. They are like a well-drawn picture which hath all the likeness of a man, but wants the principle of motion and operation. *T. Brooks.*—It is a ridiculous thing, and fit for satire to persons of judgment, to see what shifts formalists have, and what prospectives to make superficies seem a body that hath depth and bulk. *Bacon.*

20-22. Bildad here, in the close of his discourse, sums up what he had to say in a few words, setting before Job the blessing and the curse ; assuring him that as he was, so he should fare, and therefore they might conclude that as he fared, so he was. Yet to argue (as Bildad does) that because Job's family was sunk, and he himself at present seemed helpless, therefore he certainly was an ungodly, wicked man, was neither just nor charitable as long as there appeared no other evidence of his wickedness and ungodliness. Let us judge nothing before the time, but wait till the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, and the present difficulties of Providence be solved to universal and everlasting satisfaction, when the *mystery of God shall be finished.* H.

Bildad, still further than Eliphaz from weakening the erroneous supposition of a hostile God which had taken possession of Job's mind, represents God's justice, to which he attributes the death of his children, instead of His love, as the hand under which Job is to humble himself. Thereby the comfort which Job's friend offers to him becomes a torture, and his trial is made still greater ; for his conscience does not accuse him of any sins for which he should now have an angry instead of a gracious God. *Delitzsch.*—From the very beginning there is an evidence of harshness of judgment, first pronounced against Job's children, in the formally hypothetical but nevertheless real assumption that their sudden death was the consequence of their sin, the merited punishment of their crime. At the bottom of this judgment there lies, unquestionably, *a one-sidedly harsh, gross, and external representation of the nature and operation of God's retributive justice.* *Zöckler.*

CHAPTER IX.

- 1 THEN Job answered and said,
 2 Of a truth I know that it is so :
 But how can man be just with God ?
 3 If he be pleased to contend with him,
 He cannot answer him one of a thousand.
 4 *He is* wise in heart, and mighty in strength :
 Who hath hardened himself against him, and
 prospered ?
 5 Which removeth the mountains, and they
 know it not,
 When he overturneth them in his anger.
 6 Which shaketh the earth out of her place,
 And the pillars thereof tremble.
 7 Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth
 not ;
 And scaleth up the stars.
 8 Which alone stretcheth out the heavens,
 And treadeth upon the waves of the sea.
 9 Which maketh the Bear, Orion, and the
 Pleiades,
 And the chambers of the south.
 10 Which doeth great things past finding out ;
 Yea, marvellous things without number.
 11 Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not :
 He passeth on also, but I perceive him not.
 12 Behold, he seizeth *the prey*, who can hinder
 him ?
 Who will say unto him, What doest thou ?
 13 God will not withdraw his anger ;
 The helpers of Rahab do stoop under him.
 14 How much less shall I answer him,
 And choose out my words *to reason* with
 him ?
 15 Whom, though I were righteous, yet would
 I not answer ;
 I would make supplication to mine adversary.
 16 If I had called, and he had answered me ;
 Yet would I not believe that he hearkened
 unto my voice.
 17 For he [or, *he who*] breaketh me with a tem-
 pest,
 And multiplieth my wounds without cause.
 18 He will not suffer me to take my breath,
 But filleth me with bitterness.
- 19 *If we speak of strength, lo, he is mighty !*
 And if of judgment, who will appoint me a
 time ? [or, *Lo, here am I, saith he ; and*
if of judgment, who, etc.]
 20 Though I be righteous, mine own mouth
 shall condemn me :
 Though I be perfect, it shall prove me per-
 verse.
 21 *Though I be perfect, I will not regard my-*
self ;
 I despise my life.
 22 It is all one ; therefore I say,
 He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.
 23 If the scourge slay suddenly,
 He will mock at the trial of the innocent.
 24 The earth is given into the hand of the
 wicked :
 He covereth the faces of the judges thereof ;
 If *it be* not *he*, who then is it ?
 25 Now my days are swifter than a post .
 They flee away, they see no good.
 26 They are passed away as the swift ships :
 As the eagle that swoopeth on the prey.
 27 If I say, I will forget my complaint,
 I will put off my *sad* countenance, and be of
 good cheer :
 28 I am afraid of all my sorrows,
 I know that thou wilt not hold me inno-
 cent.
 29 I shall be condemned ;
 Why then do I labour in vain ?
 30 If I wash myself with snow water,
 And make my hands never so clean ;
 31 Yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch,
 And mine own clothes shall abhor me.
 32 For he is not a man, as I am, that I should
 answer him,
 That we should come together in judgment.
 33 There is no daysman betwixt us,
 That might lay his hand upon us both.
 34 Let him take his rod away from me,
 And let not his terror make me afraid :
 35 Then would I speak, and not fear him ;
 For I am not so in myself.

Chap. 9. Starting with the question, How can man substantiate his innocence in the face of God's overpowering might (vs. 2, 3), Job passes on to a delineation of this Divine power, which he conceives as a terrible, irresistible Force, which moves mountains and shifts the earth from its place ; which dictates to the sun that he shine not ; which made the mighty con-

stellations of the sky, and whose workings are beyond the compass of the human mind to grasp (vs. 4-10). Then, passing from the material world to creatures, he imagines this Power coming, say, upon himself unseen, beyond intelligence (v. 11), irresistible, irresponsible (v. 12), and cites as an instance good for all the memorable defeat of the abettors of Rahab, *the*

helpers of Rahab succumbed to him, how then should I answer him? (vs. 13, 14.) What Job describes is a meeting of God and man, that the latter may uphold his innocence against Him, or perhaps any meeting of God and man; and such a meeting has Job to face in the attempt to establish his innocence. He must be overpowered and fail though guiltless—if I were innocent I could not assert my innocence, I must fall down and supplicate my omnipotent Opponent (v. 15). This feeling of helplessness before a crushing power altogether overmasters Job and rouses him to a recklessness which is that of despair, and going back upon his words, *if I were innocent*, he cries, *I am innocent*, innocent and guilty He destroys alike; the earth is given into the hands of the wicked, He covers the faces of the judges thereof—if it is not He, who then is it? (vs. 16–24).

But now, the paroxysm being over, Job proceeds more calmly to speak of his own condition, which is but an illustration of what is everywhere seen, but sorrow and perplexity now prevail over indignation. He describes the pitiful brevity of his life (vs. 25, 26). And with a touching pathos he tells how he sometimes resolves to leave off his sad countenance and brighten up, but the thought that God has resolved not to hold him innocent again crushes him, he *has* to be guilty, and all his efforts to show himself to be clear are vain (vs. 27–31). And he rounds off his speech with a reference to that with which he began, the central difficulty: God is not a man that man might answer Him; there is no umpire between Him and man to impose his authority on both; but if He would lift His afflicting rod from Job and not affright him with His majesty, he would speak without fear, for his conscience is void of offence (vs. 32–35). A. B. D.

Job's reply to Bildad is in terms more quiet than his previous utterances, but there is the same spirit essentially at work, which at length brings him to the point of condemning God that he may justify himself. Though fully conscious of his integrity—though he feels that the sins for which his friends deem him to be punished cannot be laid to his charge, yet what would it avail him to contest the matter with One so high and so wise; and since God has, by this visitation of His judgment, passed, as his friends allege, sentence upon him, he could not dispute it with any effect. Job's answer, therefore, as a whole, although it finely sets forth the power and majesty of God, is still censurable, as it implies that the question between the afflicted and the Lord of providence is not one of right, but

of might. It seems to us that Job has by this time been so far touched by the arguments of his friends as to conceive that the rule of Divine government may indeed be such as they describe—that the Lord has, in fact, countersigned their judgment upon him; but as he is still unconscious, somewhat self-righteously unconscious, of any cause in his conduct for this judgment upon him, he inclines to regard it as an act of arbitrary power, if not of oppression, to which certainly he has not yet brought himself to submit with un murmuring acquiescence.

It has been alleged that there are apparent inconsistencies in the language of Job, on this and other occasions. But the answer is, that he is represented as torn by contending emotions. Fear and hope, despair and confidence, the spirit of submission and of bold complaint, by turns have possession of his mind, and as either predominates it gives a character to his language. Truth, in the exhibition of opposite feelings and passions, requires some inconsistencies in language and sentiment. Yet, perhaps, more inconsistency has been found than really exists. Here, for instance, he begins by acknowledging that no man can be just with God, yet ends by protesting his innocence. Here is an apparent but no real inconsistency. He knows that he is not free from sin, but he contends that he is innocent of the secret crime charged against him by his friends—that he is free from the uncommon guilt which, as they suspect, can alone account for the uncommon judgments which have befallen him. *Kitto*.

2. Job agrees with Bildad in his principle, that God never perverts judgment. '*It is so of a truth*, that wickedness brings men to ruin, and the godly are taken under God's special protection. These are truths which I subscribe to; but how can any man make good his part with God?' *In His sight shall no flesh living be justified* (Psalm 143:2). *How should man be just with God?* H.—The question here asked is the most important ever propounded by man: "How shall sinful man be regarded and treated as righteous by his Maker?" Man is conscious that he is a sinner. He feels that he must be regarded as such by God. Yet his happiness here and hereafter, his peace and his hope, depend on his being treated *as if* he were righteous, or regarded as just before God. This inquiry has led to all forms of religion among men; and it has never been satisfactorily answered except in the Christian revelation, where a way is disclosed by which God "may be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth." The question asked by Job implies

that such is the evidence and the extent of human guilt that man can never justify himself. This is clear and indisputable. Man cannot justify himself by the deeds of the law, and he can be justified only by that system which God has revealed in the Gospel, where a conscious sinner may be treated *as if* he were righteous through the merits of another. *Barnes.*

Perhaps in nothing else does the human mind realize the personality of God so vividly as in suffering the mordant stings of conscience when in bondage to remorse. We cannot feel guilty for having violated an impersonal law. What is impersonal law to me more than any other dead thing? This living soul of mine is its superior. It is God, the infinite and holy Person, against whom sin seems to have been flung in insult. That which seemed but an error at first, deepens into an outrage. Toward this outraged God it is that sorrow wells up from the broken spirit. Not law, but the Law-giver, is then the only thing in the universe with which the guilty one has to do. The great unanswered question of the ages, "How shall man be just with God?" looms up as the only question in the universe that needs an answer. *A. Phelps.*

—One commanding subject pervades the Scriptures, and rises to view on every page—this recurring theme, toward which all instructions and histories tend, is the great and anxious question of condemnation or acquittal at the bar of God, when the irreversible sentence shall come to be pronounced. "How shall man be just with God?" is the inquiry, ever and again urged upon the conscience of him who reads the Bible with a humble and teachable desire to find therein the way of life. In subserviency to this leading intention the themes which run through the sacred writings, and which distinguish those writings by an immense dissimilarity from all the remains of polytheistic literature, are those of guilt, shame, contrition, love, joy, gratitude, and affectionate obedience. And, moreover, in conformity with this same intention the Divine Being is revealed—if not exclusively, yet chiefly, as the party in the great controversy which sin has occasioned. The intercourse, therefore, which is opened between heaven and earth is almost confined to the momentous transactions of reconciliation and renewed friendship. When the Hearer of prayer invites interlocution with man, it is not, as perhaps in Eden, for the purposes of free and discursive converse, but for conference on a *special business*. "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Almighty; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be

white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." *I. T.*

God's government must be absolutely perfect, or it is no government at all. The slightest imperfection would be as really fatal to its stability as the gravest fault. The only hold which it has upon the blessed angel lies in its spotless purity. This is a point which short-sighted man is very apt to overlook or deny. "Why cannot I be saved on the mere ground of my sincere repentance? Why the need of this complicated and unintelligible doctrine of the Atonement?" For the reason that your happiness and that of every other created being are bound up in the maintenance of God's attributes untarnished, in the preservation of perfect order in His kingdom. What could you do if you could not bow down before God with the deepest reverence? The paying of this homage is essential to your happiness. Yet you could not do this if you had the least suspicion that He had failed to perform His word. Now, He would fail to perform it most notoriously if He did not punish sin—or, in other words, if He should admit sinners into His favor, on the mere ground that they were sorry for their offence. There is no deep mystery here. It is one of the plainest things which can be stated to a reasonable being. Now, redeeming love, while it accomplishes its specific work, not only does no dishonor to the character of God, but sheds a brighter lustre upon it. Instead of violating the sanctity of the Divine law, it places its perfection in new lights. Instead of endangering the loyalty of the pure spirits in heaven, it calls forth fresh songs of admiration and praise. While ample provision is made for the recovery of man, new reasons are seen for worshipping the Almighty, and for rejoicing that man was made in the Divine image. *B. B. E.*

"The Word made flesh" is the revealed solution of the difficulty. It is the story of the Son of God, clothed in our nature, tabernacling in the world. It is the tale of His life of suffering and His death of agony. It is human nature, illustrating by a course of unswerving obedience and spotless innocence the excellence, and so magnifying the righteousness of the broken law. It is the picture of "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It carries us with Him every step of a painful pilgrimage. It shows Him to us as He struggles in the garden with His anticipations of coming woe, as He agonizes on the cross, carrying on there a mysterious conflict and enduring an incomprehensible anguish, and expiring amid the throes of convulsive pain with which all nature sympa-

thized. We feel, while we read the tale, that we are communing with a singular being ; singular in the constitution of His person as harmonizing and embracing the Divine and the human ; singular in all His experience, singular in His conflicts, and singular in His death ; and while we study the exhibition we are told that in view of it God can be just and yet forgive ; that on the ground of the doing and the suffering of Jesus Christ pardon, full and free, may be extended to sin, to any sin, to all sin. This is the simple narrative, the answer which the Bible gives to the question, " Can a man be just with God ?" *E. Mason.*

3. If a man should wish to plead his own cause he will not be able to meet one out of a thousand charges which infinite wisdom might adduce, and infinite power would punish. Job thus admits a relative and inherent injustice or sinfulness in himself, but only that which he has in common with his fellow men, thereby answering the insinuations of his false friends, and in reality vindicating himself from the charge of special guilt, supposed to be brought to light and demonstrated by his terrible punishment. *Cook.*—How shall he be justified by his works who hath not one perfectly good action among a thousand sins ? He that would be justified by his works must not have one ill action among all his actions. One fly in the box of ointment corrupts all ; one defect makes a sinner, but many good actions cannot make one righteous. *Caryl.*

4. Who hath hardened himself and prospered ? No human soul is ever in exactly the same state or on the same plane after the truth is heard—better or worse, softer or harder, higher or lower, always. There is a hardening process which is *involuntary*, and which consists simply in the *repetition of the same impression*. To handle tools makes a callous hand ; no event, however startling, could impress us a second time as it did the first ; and so by handling truth carelessly we get callous of mind, and an unheeded warning or invitation of Providence or grace can never arouse us a second time as it did at first. No spiritual impression can ever repeat itself in the same form or by the same means. A conviction resisted becomes ultimately a conviction lost ; a heart refusing to respond to love becomes at last insensible to love ; a conscience disobeyed becomes by and by silent ; a will choosing evil becomes finally incapable of any other choice. This is the law of involuntary and perhaps unconscious hardening. There is also a *voluntary* process of hardening. We may cultivate insensibility to

want and woe—wilfully resist the truth, shut our eyes to light and turn the very message of life into a sentence of death. We may buy the " marble heart " if we will, and buy it cheap. We may sear conscience as with a hot iron, and it will cost but little pain to make it painless. *A. T. Pierson.*

5-13. In this grand description of God's majesty Job's immediate object is to establish the utter hopelessness of attempts to explain and vindicate His ways. *Cook.*—When Job has occasion to mention the wisdom and power of God he forgets his complaints, dwells with delight and expatiates with a flood of eloquence upon that noble subject. *H.*

8. It is of the greatest consequence that such a being as God should have images prepared to express Him and set Him before the mind of man in all the grandeur of His attributes. These He has provided in the heavens and the sea, which are the two great images of His vastness and power ; the one remote, addressing itself to cultivated reason and science ; the other nigh to mere sense, and physically efficient, a liquid symbol of the infinitude of God. Every kind of vastness—immensity, infinity, eternity, mystery, omnipotence—has its type in the sea. *II. B.*

Who alone stretcheth out the heavens. Outside our solar system there are constellations where every luminous point may be, and probably is, the centre of a system of its own, filled with vast and varied being. Beyond these visible stars, which seem like the first milestones in trackless space, there is the faint light called the Milky Way, which, by the aid of the telescope, can be resolved into masses of stars so distant from us that a ray of light from them would require thousands of years to reach us. The Milky Way is with good reason supposed to be the outer bound of that great stellar congregation to which all the visible stars belong, including our own sun. But in the depths of space, immeasurably beyond the Milky Way, there are systems and groups of systems as large as or larger than the whole field of creation already noticed. Our own galaxy is but a unit among many more. Beyond it there are others so distant that, as Sir John Herschel states, " the rays of light from some remoter *nebulae* must have been two millions of years on their way." In the presence of such conceptions thought is powerless. If we can realize all this as the product of one mind, how does it magnify our idea of it ! How great the Being who not only comprehends all these worlds at a glance, but who made them, sustains them, and more than

fills them ! "Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee." *Ker.*

9. When he saith, "which maketh the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades," Job means, which makes them appear or do their office ; for the discourse is not about Creation, but about Providence ; so that the meaning is only this, God orders the times of their rising and setting to distinguish the seasons of the year, and to produce their several effects in every season. *Caryl.* — He ordereth and disposeth them, as the word "maketh" is sometimes used in Scripture. *Poole.* — The names Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades are of late invention in comparison with the Hebrew Ash, Cesil and Cimah. What is here intended is to point out to us that all the constellations of heaven obey God in their several seasons. To the same purpose is that which venerable Bede delivers in his comment on this text : "By these constellations, which are more celebrated than almost all the stars in the firmament of heaven, it is signified that the whole system of the heavenly bodies is under the governance of God." *Chappelow.*

9, 10. The limit of the star-depths has not yet been found ; no one has "stretched the line upon it." But men have climbed out eagerly upon the farthest stars to get shadows and angles of measurement beyond. Thus far, however, a dim haze in the constellation of Orion seems to mark the outer rim of the visible universe. So distant is it that its light is thought to require at least fifty thousand years to reach us. Meantime our sun has been discovered to be moving through space with the system of which our earth is one, and according to all analogy is believed to be making a "circuit" in the heaven, as David described it in the nineteenth Psalm. But about what centre ? for that centre, when found, would seem the centre of all worlds. The independent studies of the German Mädler converging upon Alcyone, the brightest of the Pleiades, he has with great skill maintained that the pivot of the universe is there. As this conclusion has not been shown incredible, and as no other definite opinion has been ventured, it seems reasonable to say that the best astronomic conjecture of to-day would, to measure the visible universe, set its centre in the Pleiades, and stretching a radius to Orion, swing round through that the outer circle of the worlds. But in so doing the astronomer points us back to the words of Him who "answered Job out of the whirlwind," who, emphasizing the depth of Divine mystery and the range of Divine omnipotence, blends with the question, "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven ?" the challenge,

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion ?" If, indeed, the Pleiades be at the centre, and Orion at the outer rim of stellar space (and it is curious that the term translated "Pleiades" means in Chaldaic "the pivot," and that "Orion" means in Greek "the border," or "bound"), how better than in these words could the science of to-day express the range of Omnipotence ! But our growing knowledge assures us that the absolute limits have not yet been reached, nor the contents even of the near world measured. The stars within the range of natural vision must always have seemed easily numerable, being not more than 1500 in any hemisphere. The famous catalogue of Hipparchus found 1022 the limit. But under the telescopic eye they swarm in increasing myriads, so that, as Herschel says, they lie upon the heavens like "*glittering dust.*" Professor Nichol says of the distant nebula of Orion, long thought to be unresolvable : "It would seem that if all other clusters hitherto gauged were collected and compressed into one, they would not surpass this mighty group, in which every wisp, every wrinkle is a *sand heap* of stars." The dust of the earth, the sand of the sea thus alone seem adequate to symbolize the innumerable host of heaven now brought to view. And as deeper vision breaks up nebulae into stars, rank after rank of new worlds wheeling into view, but brings new nebulae again, we pause bewildered, as in presence of the Infinite. When we are further told that even with telescopic help we never see the body of the stars, but only their light—that so limited are our faculties at the best that, according to Professor Tyndall, two thirds of the sun rays are lost to us, because they fail to enter the channel of vision—and that, according to Professor Huxley, "the noonday silence of a tropical forest is, after all, due to the dulness of our hearing," and could we catch the "murmurs of these tiny maelstroms" (the life movements in the cells of the trees), "we should be stunned as with the roar of a great city"—do we not recognize the thought of Job, as rendered in Dr. Conant's excellent version, "Who doeth great things, unsearchable ; things wonderful, without number." *J. B. Thomas.*

10. Marvellous things without number. On the earth we find things mysteriously small ; in the heavens things mysteriously large. Here we have not merely inanimate atoms that are inconceivably minute, but also living beings furnished with all the organs of sense in the highest perfection, and yet barely visible as so organized under a microscope mag-

nifying two hundred and fifty thousand times. And how far may even these living infinitesimals be from the last minims of animated nature ! On the other hand, peering up through the night, we discover a world to which our earth is almost a nothing—twelve thousand million times greater—also a system of worlds within which could be packed away, at average star-distances from one another, the cube of that number of such spheres—nay, a system that actually embraces within its glorious rotund the whole materialism and spiritualism of the universe. . . . When the motion of spheres revolving in orbits about their common centre of gravity is seen to be incessant as well as universal ; when it means the transfer through space of huge worlds and huger systems of worlds at the rate of 50,000 and even 1,200,000 miles an hour ; where such a motion as this is combined with a thousand other motions woven together inextricably and yet never interfering with one another and separately calculable—as when a moon moves on its axis, also around its planet, also around the sun, also around the sun's centre of revolution, and so on indefinitely ; when each of these motions has superimposed on itself myriads of other motions called *perturbations*, struggling toward all points of the compass, we find ourselves as much lost in this vast wilderness of motions as ever was traveller in new lands or babes in a wood. So many questions can be asked about them that science cannot answer, nor hope to answer. What endless mazes ! How the shuttles fly through the heavens in all directions, weaving out, we know not how, law and order and stability ! Who can disentangle the threads that make up the wondrous web ? Astronomy is helpless and hopeless in the presence of such labyrinths. *Burr.*

The telescope reveals a system in every star. The microscope discloses a world in every atom. The one announces that this mighty globe, with the whole burden of its people and of its countries, is but a grain of sand on the high field of immensity. The other teaches me that every grain of sand may harbor within it the tribes and the families of a busy population. The one declares the insignificance of the world I tread upon. The other redeems it from all its insignificance ; for it tells me that in the leaves of every forest, and in the flowers of every garden, and in the waters of every rivulet, there are worlds teeming with life, and numberless as are the glories of the firmament. The one suggests that beyond and above all that is visible to man there may lie fields of creation which sweep immeasurably along and carry the impress of

the Almighty's hand to the remotest scenes of the universe. The other suggests that within and beneath all that minuteness which the aided eye of man has been able to explore there may be a region of invisibles ; and that, could we draw aside the mysterious curtain which shrouds it from our senses, we might there see a theatre of as many wonders as astronomy has unfolded, a universe within the compass of a point so small as to elude all the powers of the microscope, but where the wonder-working God finds room for the exercise of all His attributes, where He can raise another mechanism of worlds, and fill and animate them all with the evidences of His glory. Then I can no longer resist the conclusion that it would be a transgression of sound argument, as well as a daring of impiety, to draw a limit around the doings of this unsearchable God ; and should a professed revelation from heaven tell me of an act of condescension in behalf of some separate world, so wonderful that angels desired to look into it, and the eternal Son had to move from His seat of glory to carry it into accomplishment, all I ask is the evidence of such a revelation ; for, let it tell me as much as it may of God letting Himself down for the benefit of one single province of His dominions, this is no more than what I see lying scattered in numberless examples before me, and meeting me in every walk of observation ; and now that the microscope has unveiled the wonders of another region, I see strewn around me, with a profusion which baffles my every attempt to comprehend it, the evidence that there is no one portion of the universe of God too minute for His notice nor too humble for the visitations of His care. T. C.

14. Much less shall I. If all powers of earth and heaven are unable to stand against Him, how then could I ?

15. My adversary, the person who contends with me in judgment. Job means that, were he conscious of perfect innocence, the might and wisdom of his adversary would leave him no option but supplication. *Cook.*—Though he vindicated his own integrity to his friends, and would not yield that he was a hypocrite and a wicked man, as they suggested, yet he would never plead it as his righteousness before God. I will never venture upon the covenant of innocence, nor think to come off by virtue of that. Job knew so much of God, and knew so much of himself, that he durst not insist upon his own justification before God. H.

16. The meaning of this verse is : If God really answered my appeal and permitted me to stand at the bar and plead my cause against

Him, I could not rely upon His hearing me ; for that would involve an inconceivable condescension. Job, it must be noted, does not either renounce God or his own integrity, but he trenches on the grievous sin of imputing to Him a real disregard of justice. Such words must not be taken as a deliberate conclusion, but partly as the wanderings of a maddened and embittered spirit, partly as the struggles of a perplexed mind.

17. For. Literally, Who ; but our translation preserves the sense. Job argues that God would not hearken to his supplication from the fact that He now pursues him with unceasing calamities. *Cook.*—**Without cause.** Without any extraordinary guilt which should procure such punishment. *Clark.*—*Without cause.* This consideration defines Job's issue with the friends ; and we, who know the Prologue, know that Job, on God's own confession, has pronounced truly. This is no plea of sinlessness ; Job would not make such a plea ; but a complaint of *multiplied* wounds—punishment far beyond its desert. All sense of proportion between desert and punishment is lost in this experience. J. F. G.

17, 18. Here, no doubt, he *spake unadvisedly with his lips* ; he reflected on God's goodness in saying that he was not suffered to take his breath, while yet he had such good use of his reason and speech as to be able to talk thus ; and on His justice in saying that it was without cause. Yet it is true that, as there are many who are chargeable with more sin than the common infirmities of human nature, and yet feel no more sorrow than that of the common calamities of human life ; so there are many who feel more than the common calamities of human life, and yet are conscious to themselves of no more than the common infirmities of human nature. H.

Job's fundamental position is thoroughly false—that God is merciless, disposing of men in sheer arbitrary exercise of power, irrespective of all human worthiness or unworthiness. Could he have looked into that council chamber of heaven, he would have learned how God delights in the way of an upright man, and honors all sincere efforts to serve Him. He would have seen himself not as a victim of righteous retribution, but as a witness for God, by whom God would prove that He could inspire a character which would serve Him for nought. V.

20-24. These verses assert a great truth, but in a spirit which makes it a virtual untruth. From the certain truth that all men are guilty in God's sight, equally unable to resist His

power or to sustain His judgment, Job draws the false inference that they are all involved in one condemnation, those who in a true though relative sense are perfect, and those who are altogether wicked. *Cook.*

20. Though I be perfect, it shall prove me perverse. Observe hence that famous Gospel doctrine, No man can be justified before God by the works of the law. It is as noble a proof of free justification in the Old Testament as any in the New. *Caryl.*—**Mine own mouth shall condemn me.** Has the outside world been entirely fair and just in its judgments of the Church ? Has it not judged Christianity by imperfect disciples, and has it not condemned these imperfect disciples because they are not what they never pretended to be ? Has it not criticised half-finished work, and condemned, not only the work, but Christianity itself, because this work was not up to the sample ? It is very common to hear men say that such and such a Christian is no better than the average of people outside of the Christian Church, thus condemning the genuineness of his character because he is not a perfect Christian. As Christians cannot by any possibility be perfected on the instant, the large majority must be in various stages of progress—nay, most of this large majority are not even half finished. The Christian Church itself is a piece of unfinished work, and every individual member is the same. I never knew a Christian to set himself up as a pattern. So far as I know they are very shy of pretension, and deprecate nothing more than the thought that anybody should take them for finished specimens of the work of Christianity in human life and character. *J. G. Holland.*

23, 24. He will mock at the trial of the innocent. A fearful arraignment of the Divine government in two distinct counts : (1) If, in the course of affairs, the scourge slay the innocent, instead of saving or even pitying them He (God) laughs at their sufferings ; and (2) instead of overthrowing and punishing the wicked, He gives the earth into their hands, while the judges themselves, by whom a better judgment should be meted out, are blinded so that they cannot administer justly. *Curry.*

23. He charges God with mocking at their perplexity, the temptation which besets them to question His goodness and wisdom. Jerome says truly : “ There is in the whole book nothing harsher than this ; ” it is a Titanic outbreak of unutterable woe.

24. He covereth. So that they cannot

discern between good and evil ; the wrong is not merely committed with impunity, but altogether escapes the notice of those whose duty it is to administer justice. The second clause should be rendered : *If it be not He, who then is it?* Cook.—If God does not do that—*well, then, who is it?* Can it be denied this puzzling, shocking phenomenon must ultimately come from Him? *Ewald*.—Others besides Job have asked such questions. A. B. D.

The very confusions that are in the world are an argument for the power of God ; for, seeing the world continue in the midst of such confusions, it shows there is a mighty power balancing those confusions so exactly that they cannot ruin the world. If there were not an overruling power in God, wicked men ruling would soon ruin all. There are mysteries of providence as well as of faith, and many are as much troubled to interpret what God doeth as what He hath spoken. *Caryl*.

In this passage Job's spirit reaches the lowest abyss of its alienation from God. From this time onward his mind is calmer, and the moral idea of God begins to reassert its place in his thoughts. Here God appears to him as a mere omnipotent power, with a bias, if He have one, to evil and cruelty, and he speaks of Him distantly as "He." His conception is but the reflection of his own case, as he conceived it, flung over the world, though his conception of his own case was false. In these verses Job traverses directly the maxim of his friends in regard to the discriminating righteousness of God, and the examples which he cites he might have used to demolish their theory. But he is little concerned with their theory here ; later he does use his examples to drive them from the field. But here he is occupied with himself, with the impossibility of making his innocence, which he is conscious of, to appear and be admitted ; for, of course, to himself and to all others his afflictions were the testimony of God to his guilt. And thus, though in the last verses his view extends to the world in general, he comes back in v. 25 to himself. A. B. D.

25-35. The rapidity with which life fleets away, and the greatness of his sorrows, make it impossible for Job to accept consolation ; while the certainty of his condemnation, should he appeal for justice, makes expostulation or defence utterly useless ; what he needs is an *umpire*, a daysman, standing between him and God, and a cessation of the infliction and terrors of Divine wrath ; then he might plead his cause without fear of the result. Thus in the very depth of

misery there comes (not, indeed, a hope, but) an aspiration for a Mediator. Cook.

25, 26. Schultens very ingeniously suggests that Job compares the days of his prosperity in three several degrees with what we esteem the swiftest in the three elements—namely, with the quick despatches of the post by land ; with the more expeditious motion of papyrus-vessels by sea ; and, which exceeds them both for swiftness, with the flight of the eagle in the air to his prey. *Chappelow*.—**Swifter than a post.** We must not think of any organized plan for the regular transmission of *letters*, but simply of the speed with which a courier charged with a special message, oral or written, travels. We suppose that Job had in view the speed of a man mounted on a swift dromedary—the animal usually employed in the regions where Job dwelt. *Kitto*.—How swift the motion of time !—it is always upon the wing, hastening to its period ; it stays for no man. What little need have we of pastimes, and what great need to redeem time, when time runs on so fast toward eternity, which comes as time goes !

27, 28. It is easy to preach patience to those that are in trouble, and to tell them they must forget their complaints and comfort themselves ; but it is not so soon done as said. Fear and sorrow are tyrannizing things, not easily brought into the subjection they ought to be kept in to religion and right reason. H.

29. He forms for himself a gloomy, horrible representation of a *God of absolute power*, who rules and directs not according to objective standards of right, but according to the promptings of an arbitrary will subject to no restraint. It is the "just God" absolutely, in essence disjoined from all kindness and love, disposing of the destinies of men in accordance with an unconditional arbitrary decree, irrespective of all moral worthiness or unworthiness ; such is the Being whom Job here delineates, and before whose hostile assaults on his person, guiltless as he knows himself to be, he recoils in shuddering anguish. *Zöckler*.—But his complaint of God as implacable and inexorable was by no means to be excused. It was the language of his corruption. He knew better things, and at another time would have been far from harboring any such hard thoughts of God as now broke in upon his spirit, and broke out in these passionate complaints. Good men do not always speak like themselves ; but God considers their frame and the strength of their temptations ; gives them leave afterward to unsay it by repentance, and will not lay it to their charge. H.

30. The thought suggested is that Job could

really clear himself of guilt, but that his justification would be useless; it would not stand God's judgment. In this, as throughout the passage, there is the recognition of a real and universal truth, but partially understood, and perverted by natural passion and infirmity. Job has a right, so far as regards his friends, to maintain his integrity; on the other hand, he is right in believing that no human being can be held innocent in God's sight; but the former conviction is bound up with feelings which need chastening, the latter leads him to the inference that moral differences are disregarded by the Almighty. *Cook.*

30, 31. These words are capable of a good construction. If we be ever so industrious to justify ourselves before men and to preserve our credit with them, if we keep our hands ever so clean from the pollutions of gross sin which fall under the eye of the world; yet God, who knows our hearts, can charge us with so much secret sin as will forever take off all our pretensions to purity and innocency, and make us see ourselves odious in the sight of the holy God. Paul, while a Pharisee, made his hands very clean; but when the commandment came and discovered to him his heart-sins, that *plunged him in the ditch.* *H.*

32-34. The preceding verses described how unavailing all Job's efforts were to make out his innocence in the face of the fixed resolution of God to hold him guilty. Now Job comes back to what is the real difficulty—God is not a man like himself. *A. B. D.*—Take Job's view of God, as the magnificent words (vs. 5-12) describe Him, overturning the mountains, shaking the earth, scaling the stars, striding upon the heights of the sea, and bringing this tremendous energy to bear in afflicting a poor, weak son of man, and do you wonder that he cried out for some one to stand between him and that awful power and holiness? *V.*

32. *He is not a man, like me;* this characteristic of God, removing Him from all human standards and conceptions, and making justice and mercy as between God and man mere empty names, is the ultimate root of Job's problem. His deeply felt need, which his unexplained punishment makes palpable, is that God should be like man—that there should be some common ground of understanding between them. Thus his outreach from the depths is Messianic.

33. *Nor is there any Daysman*—only a negative assertion this, but noteworthy as suggesting what would solve his problem if only it were true, and especially noteworthy as originating with the human, with Job. And though only

negative, yet it is to him such a fascinating idea that he broods upon it, and turns it over in his mind, and finally comes to believe and assert it. *J. F. G.*

Daysman. Or umpire. In some of the northern parts of England, any arbitrator, umpire, or elected judge is commonly termed a diesman or daysman. The word "day" in all idioms signifies *judgment.* *Hammond.*—**That might lay his hand upon us both.** "The laying the hand, like a just umpire, on both parties," implies a coercive power to enforce the execution of his decrees; this no one could have on the Almighty; it was therefore vain to contend with Him. *Scott.*—There is no prophecy of the Incarnation in these verses. But there is a cry of the human heart amidst its troubles that it might meet and see God as a man. Then man's relation to Him might be understood and adjusted. That the cry is uttered under a misconception of God and of the meaning of His providence does not make the expression of man's need any the less real or touching, for in our great darkness here misconceptions of God prevail so much over true conceptions of Him. *A. B. D.*

This complaint that there was not *any daysman* is, in effect, a wish that there were, and so the LXX read it: *Oh, that there were a mediator between us!* Job would gladly refer the matter, but no creature was capable of being a referee, and therefore he must even refer it still to God Himself, and resolve to acquiesce in His judgment. Our Lord Jesus is the blessed Daysman, who has mediated between heaven and earth, has laid His hand upon us both; to Him the Father has committed all judgment, and we must; but this matter was not then brought to so clear a light as it is now by the Gospel, which leaves no room for such a complaint as this. *II.*—There is, indeed, a Daysman betwixt God and man, but God Himself hath appointed Him. His own good-will and free grace moving Him thereunto, He stands engaged in the bonds of everlasting truth and faithfulness to perform what Jesus Christ, as Mediator, should ask for us. Unto Him we may safely commit our cause and our souls with that assurance of the apostle, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Christ, God-man, is umpire between God and man. What we trust Him with shall not miscarry; He will make our cause good and our persons acceptable before God in that great day. *Caryl.*

Job simply tells over again the old, old story of

the human heart : God is so remote, His majesty and power so transcendent, that direct approach to Him is impossible unless in something or some one the two lives and the two conditions meet and blend, so that a daysman may stand between, with one hand on weak, ignorant man, and the other touching the Divine throne itself and interpreting the one life to the other. This demand for a mediator is backed and urged by two great interlinked facts—sin and suffering. . . . Christ steps forth from the darkness which veils Calvary and says to the great host of the suffering : “ Here is suffering which is not retribution, suffering ministered by perfect love and issuing in power and purity.” We need, our great humanity needs, such a daysman, partaker of both natures, the Divine and the human, to show us suffering on its heavenly as well as on its earthly side, and to flood its earthly side with heavenly light by the revelation. The transfigured and the crucified Christ are one and the same. Suffering and glory blend in Him unto greater glory, and through Him God’s suffering servant learns that he suffers with Him that they may be glorified together. In Him we have the human experience of sorrow and its Divine interpretation. Job’s longing, therefore, is literally and fully met. To the cry that comes from that far-off wreck of earthly happiness, “ He is not a man, as I am,” we can

answer to-day, “ He *is* a man.” To the words, “ There is no daysman to lay his hand upon us both,” we answer, “ There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” *Vincent.*

34, 35. If God would only remove his pain from him for a brief space (Job pleads), so that he might recover himself for self-defence, and if He (God) would not stifle his (Job’s) words, as they come freely forth from his lips, by confronting him with His overwhelming majesty, then he would fearlessly speak for himself ; for I am not conscious of such a moral condition as compels me to remain dumb before Him. His self-consciousness makes him desire that the possibility of answering for himself might be granted him ; and, since he is weary of life, and has renounced all claim for its continuance, he will at least give his complaints free course, and pray the Author of his sufferings that He would not permit him to die the death of the wicked, contrary to the testimony of his own conscience. *Delitzsch.*—Let us not blame Job for his impatience and irreverent language until we have carefully examined our own hearts in the times of trial like those which he endured. Let us not infer that he was worse than other men until we are placed in similar circumstances, and are able to manifest better feelings than he did. *Barnes.*

CHAPTER X.

1 MY soul is weary of my life ;
 I will give free course to my complaint ;
 I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
 2 I will say unto God, Do not condemn me ;
 Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.
 3 Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress,
 That thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands,
 And shine upon the counsel of the wicked ?
 4 Hast thou eyes of flesh,
 Or seest thou as man seeth ?
 5 Are thy days as the days of man,
 Or thy years as man’s days,
 6 That thou inquirest after mine iniquity,
 And searchest after my sin,
 7 Although thou knowest that I am not wicked ;
 And there is none that can deliver out of thine hand ?

8 Thine hands have framed me and fashioned me
 Together round about ; yet thou dost destroy me.
 9 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast fashioned me as clay ;
 And wilt thou bring me into dust again ?
 10 Hast thou not poured me out as milk,
 And curdled me like cheese ?
 11 Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh,
 And knit me together with bones and sinews.
 12 Thou hast granted me life and favour,
 And thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.
 13 Yet these things thou didst hide in thine heart ;
 I know that this *is* with thee :
 14 If I sin, then thou markest me,
 And thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.
 15 If I be wicked, woe unto me ;

And if I be righteous, yet shall I not lift up
my head ;
Being filled with ignominy
And looking upon mine affliction.
16 And if *my head* exalt itself, thou huntest me
as a lion :
And again thou shewest thyself marvellous
upon me.
17 Thou renewest thy witnesses against me,
And increasest thine indignation upon me ;
Changes and warfare are with me.
18 Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth
out of the womb ?
I had given up the ghost, and no eye had
seen me.

Chap. 10. *Job's new appeal to God, in the form of an effort to discover what in the Divine nature it can be that will explain his terrible sufferings.*

The chapter attaches itself closely to the last words of chap. 9, precisely as chap. 7 to the end of chap. 6. Chap. 9 ended with the expression of the feeling on Job's part of his own innocence, and at the same time of the feeling that God had determined to hold him guilty. Added to this was the feeling of his helplessness to make his innocence appear against God's power and majesty. After a slight pause, perhaps, these mixed feelings gather new volume in his mind, and he breaks out, perplexed and baffled, *my soul is weary of my life*. Then commences an appeal unto God in which one supposition after another is hazarded as to what in God's nature it is that is the secret of Job's sufferings, each supposition being refuted by being seen to be in contradiction to God's true nature. The whole thus forms a very impassioned argument with God founded on His own nature.

First, Job appeals to God not to *make* him guilty by mere arbitrary will, but if He have cause against him to reveal it (v. 2). Then with a strong feeling of his own innocence he asks if it be a pleasure to God to oppress and reject the just and smile upon the wicked ? Can it be that God finds pleasure in this (v. 3) ? Then he wonders if God have eyes of flesh, subject to illusion and error, so that He mistakes the innocent for the guilty ; or if He be short-lived, like men, and must gratify His vengeance on suspicion lest His victim should escape Him—though, in truth, none of this could be, for He *knew* Job's innocence, and none could deliver from His hand (vs. 4-7). Then the mention of His "hands" suggests to Job, and he brings it before God, the strange contradiction in God's treatment of him—His hands fashioned him

19 I should have been as though I had not
been ;
I should have been carried from the womb
to the grave.
20 Are not my days few ? cease then,
And let me alone, that I may take comfort a
little,
21 Before I go whence I shall not return,
Even to the land of darkness and of the
shadow of death ;
22 The land dark as midnight ;
The land of the shadow of death, without
any order,
And where the light is as midnight.

once like a precious vessel, and now He reduces him to dust again (v. 8) ! This contradiction, vividly put in v. 8, is then enlarged upon. Job recalls God's remembrance to past times, how He wonderfully began his being in the womb, and with a careful and minute tenderness fashioned all his parts, forming him with a prodigal expenditure of skill ; and then when a living man hedged him about with lovingkindness and guarded his spirit with constant oversight (vs. 9-12). The contradiction between this gracious guidance in the past and God's present treatment of him utterly baffles Job, and he leaps to the desperate conclusion that all that he now suffers had always been designed by God, and that even while expending His greatest skill upon him He had been cherishing this deep purpose of plaguing him. With an elaborate minuteness Job goes over this Divine scheme (vs. 13-17), and as he realizes it to himself in detailing it, he finally cries out in despair, why God ever gave him life at all (vs. 18, 19) ? and begs for a little easing of his pain before he goes into the land of darkness (vs. 20, 21) ; concluding with some terrible touches concerning that gloomy land, where the light is as darkness (v. 22). A. B. D.

1. The only ease of a troubled soul is to pour out complaints unto God. It will be ease to the mind to open up the grief to any, but far more to open it up to God. Job's complaint here is the laying forth of his present burden ; what he felt and what he feared ; even the wrestling of his faith and sense, brought forth before God in such words as he feels the battle within, the battle betwixt sense and reason or suggestion on the one hand, faith and God's spirit on the other hand. The wrestling of these two makes up a complaint. "My soul is weary of my life"—this is sense's part ; it says that it is best to be dead and out of pain ; which lets us see that in

the day of sore trouble and grief sense will cry out, "God, if I were dead!" But this is the voice of nature, and not God's voice. *Dickson.*

Do not quarrel with your lot in life. Do not complain of its never-ceasing cares, its petty environment, the vexations you have to stand, the small and sordid souls you have to live and work with. That is the practice which God appoints you; and it is having its work in making you patient, and humble, and generous, and unselfish, and kind, and courteous. Do not grudge the hand that is moulding the still too shapeless image within you. It is growing more beautiful, though you see it not, and every touch of temptation may add to its perfection. Therefore, keep in the midst of life. Do not isolate yourself. Be among men, and among things, and among troubles, and difficulties, and obstacles. Character grows in the stream of the world's life. That chiefly is where men are to learn love. *II. Drummond.*

2. I will say unto God. Faith takes him up again and bids him speak of his complaint to God; complain *to* Him, and not *of* Him. In straits we may complain to God, but not of God. Therefore, say not to others, God hath dealt thus and thus with me; but go to Himself, for thou wilt be warmliest heard of Himself. And be sure this shall both give ease, and make God to say that He is thy salvation; that He will neither leave thee nor forsake thee, and bid thee call on Him in the day of thy trouble, and He shall hear thee. **Do not condemn me.** The voice of sense is, that I am condemned; but faith says, Lord, Thou wilt not condemn me, but absolve me; which also shows that faith doth not abide to be condemned or separated from God. **Show me.** Albeit faith cannot see a reason why it is thus handled, yet it will not yield to sense, nor to men's words, nor to appearances of God's anger; albeit it cannot particularly refute all challenges, yet it yields not, but speirs at God, how it can be? and rests not till it finds satisfaction. *Dickson.*

It is because Job so thoroughly believes in God that God's attitude perplexes and affrights him. He is troubled because God's character is seemingly impugned by his affliction. He is confident that God has an explanation for him if he can but get to God and plead his cause. *V.*

3. Is it beseeching—that is, worthy of God as God? At the outset of his misery Job would not "attribute aught unbecoming to God" (1:22). Neither does he here; he does rather what is more honest and open, goes straight to God with his difficulty and seeks explanation by some principle that he can understand. It

is like Abraham's question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" *That Thou shouldst oppress.* Notice that Job uses the word presupposing his innocence; not *punish*, as if he were guilty. *J. F. G.*

He thinks it unbecoming the goodness of God and the mercifulness of His nature to deal so hardly with His creature as to lay upon him more than he can bear. *Is it good unto Thee that Thou shouldst oppress?* Now, Lord, what is the meaning of this? Such is Thy nature that this cannot be a pleasure to Thee; and such is Thy name that it cannot be an honor to Thee; why, then, dealest Thou thus with me? Far be it from Job to think that God did him wrong, but he is quite at a loss how to reconcile His providences with His justice, as good men have often been, and must wait until the day shall declare it. Let us, therefore, now harbor no hard thoughts of God, because we shall then see there was no cause for them. *H.*—Sense says to Job that for all his righteousness God will cast him off, oppress and despise him; that it is but bootless to reckon rights or wrongs with God, for He is risen in anger against him. But the voice of faith says God will not oppress, despise, or cast off; for his interrogation proves it; his asking if it can be imports a denial that it can be. It lets us see that whatever sense says against God, faith says the clean contrary. *Dickson.*

4-6. The force of this argument rests upon Job's conviction that God is omniscient, and from everlasting to everlasting; so that, in fact, its very audacity proves inner faith. *Cook.*—There is a strong battle in Job's breast. Sense said one thing to him, suggestion and his friends said the same, and he had only the grip of faith to stick by. And now, here he sticks by faith, and will not quit his grips; and therefore he speaks thus. Out of this questioning, we learn that the man who has learned God's nature and properties will be better furnished with matter of dispute in his tentation about God's providence; for all this dispute and questioning which Job has is grounded upon his knowledge of God. He had learned God's attributes so tightly, as from them he could dispute his matter accurately, and from these affirm that it could not be as his friends alleged. Therefore, provide yourselves in time with the knowledge of God, that in the day of trial ye may make use of it. *Dickson.*

7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked. He had already owned himself a sinner and guilty before God, but he here stands to it that he was not wicked, not devoted to sin, not an enemy to God, not a dissembler in his

religion—that *he had not wickedly departed from his God* (Psalm 18 : 21). Here see what ought to quiet us under our troubles ; that it is to no purpose to contend with Omnipotence. What will abundantly comfort us, if we are able to appeal to God, as Job here, “ Lord, I cannot say that I am not wanting or I am not weak ; but through grace I can say, *I am not wicked ; Thou knowest I am not, for Thou knowest I love Thee.*” H.—Where he is thus strenuous in asserting his integrity, it is only in opposition to the notion which those mistaken friends had entertained of him—that he had been guilty of some gross sins which he had the art to hide from the world, but that he was in reality a wicked man and a hypocrite in his behavior. This is what Job utterly denies and disclaims ; though he nowhere arrogates to himself perfect innocence or freedom from sin. *Peters.*

A renewed man may know a change in himself, the begun work of God in himself, albeit it be not clear at all times, but will oftentimes be so put in the mist as he wots not what to say ; but when he gets liberty to look about him, he may pronounce of God’s work in him and (as Job here) appeal to God and say that he is not wicked. An honest, sincere man will be bold with God. An honest man is not a sinless man, but one who, as he shall answer to God, strives against all known sin in private and in public ; and when he is overcome in sin is never at rest till he be sure that God is pacified and has assurance of a remission granted. He tells God whatever he feels or fears, puts God on all his counsels, goes to Him in all his distresses ; counts God so merciful and good, that he will go to Him ; so constant that He will not, cannot change, and still justifies God to be what He has spoken of Himself in His Word. Such a man will get liberty to tell all his mind to God, and God will not mistake him or captiously snap at his words, but expound them favorably. As he construes God according to His mind, so God construes him according to his aim and desire. Therefore, be honest before God, for there is no beguiling of Him. Study plain dealing with God. If there be great wickedness in your heart, tell Him of it. Tell Him that it is stiff, stubborn, and backward ; or that it is borne down with naughty burdens, and will not take on a better burden. Let God be thy confidant in all, and whatever thou would have close kept commit that to Him. *Dickson.*

8-12. The vividness with which God’s process of creation is conceived and portrayed is an indication of the keenness with which Job realizes the awful inconsistency that confronts

him. The wantonness of the destruction heightens his sense of the wonderfulness of creation. J. F. G.

9. Remember that Thou hast made me? Now Job begins to plea God with reasons and arguments ; and as his first, he takes hold of God by the far end of the band of creation, and by that draws strength to himself and confidence to look for mercy.

12. Granted me favor. Count everything received of God a favor, so nothing shall make thee impatient as to storm when He gives or takes ; for if He take, it is the loosing of some burden off us ; if He strike, it is but the surgeon’s lancet ; if He gives a bitter cup, it is healing. Those who construe all that God doeth to be out of love are God’s friends. *Dickson.*

God maintains us ; having lighted the lamp of life, He does not leave it to burn upon its own stock, but continually supplies it with fresh oil ; “ *Thy visitation has preserved my spirit, kept me alive, protected me from the adversaries of life, the death we are in the midst of, and the dangers we are continually exposed to ; and blessed me with all the necessary supports of life and the daily supplies it needs and craves.*” H.

13. “ And these things hast Thou hid in Thy heart.” That is, Albeit now, Lord, Thou seemest to be wroth and about to destroy me, and to forget all the pains Thou hast taken in forming of me ; yet I believe Thou hast some love to me, which Thou had when Thou formed me. I know that same care Thou had in fashioning of me continues ; albeit Thou seem to destroy me, yet love is hid in Thy breast. Job is put to a trial when God hides. It lets us see that the time of God’s hiding of His love is the proper time of faith’s trial. See here the piercing look of Job’s faith ! It passeth in by God’s hand to his heart ; which lets us see that faith looks more to God’s Word than to His work, and more to His heart than to His hand, and to that which is hid than to that which is seen.

14, 15. Job is put to search himself in his afflictions. We see that afflictions are sent, that we may be put to a search what the matter can mean. We see that in the search he says : “ I am either dealt with as a man guilty of sins unrepented, or a righteous, tried, and humble man. If it be the punishment of a wicked man, then woe’s me ; woe, and double woe to me ! But in this my comfort abides, that I am not wicked. If I be righteous, yet will I not lift mine head—that is, if the Lord be trying me

as a righteous man, I know it is but to humble me, and I am content it be so." Think not that God hath not heard you because ye cannot get rest, for herein ye are mistaken, seeing Job, accepted of God, and humbled before Him, is yet restless in his mind, that he may be experimentally humbled, and patient till the delivery come. Out of this last we see albeit a man be righteous, yet is he not freed from correction—and here stands the dispute between Job and his friends. For Job affirms that a man indeed may be righteous and yet hardly handled by God's afflicting hand; but they, not having seen the like in their experience, hold the contrary; yet Job's ground holds fast. *Dickson*.

16, 17. The outward evils inflicted on him he connects with his own inward conflicts, to which he ascribes every renewal and aggravation of them. *Thy witnesses*—the evils which he was suffering, regarded as evidences of God's displeasure; the fundamental error in his, as well as his friends' view of God's dealings with him. *Conant*.—That which made his afflictions most grievous was that he felt God's indignation in them; that was it that made them taste so bitter and lie so heavy. They were God's witnesses against him, tokens of His displeasure; this made the sores of his body wounds in his spirit. His affliction increased, and God's indignation in the affliction; he found himself no way better; these witnesses were renewed against him, that if one did not reach to convict him another might. Changes and war were against him. *H*.

18. Consider what guiltiness is in this passion and reasonless speech of Job's: "Wherefore brought Thou me forth?" It is a reproof of God's work, a finding fault with God's providence, a casting down of all that God had done to him or by him. Job can draw no comfort to himself from anything that is befallen him in this life, or from any good that he has done, nor from anything God has done to him; so doth passion blind men in all that God has done to them, or by them. We see that in the day of trial, from bygone experiences, we may find no comfort. It must be fresh furniture that will do thy turn; that thou may have it, depend upon God at all times and in every case. Out of Job's error learn we, whatever comes on us, rue we never that we are in life. Say not, it is better never to have had children or riches than to have had them and then to be taken away, for God has wise reasons both for giving and taking. Be not so foolish as to misinterpret any past work or gift of God. *Dickson*.

20-22. The frenzy spends itself here, and dies away into a plaintive wail of remonstrance, like that of an exhausted child. Once more he takes up the theme of chap. 3, lamenting that he ever saw the light, and praying for a little respite and rest ere he goes hence to be no more. *Vincent*.

21, 22. Job accumulates epithets to express the sense of utter blackness and desolation of the state which he deliberately prefers to life in misery—each word has its peculiar horror; darkness (*Gen. 1 : 2*), such as was on the face of the waters before light was; "shadow of death," a word originally meaning "deep shade," but modified in form and signification so as to express the blackness of death; then returning to the same thought, and bringing out its full significance, "a land gloomy as blackness itself, the blackness of the shadow of death;" then the "without order," the return, as it were, to chaotic disorder, the *tohu* and *bohu* preceding creation; last of all, the darkness which, as it were, radiates a hideous mockery of sunlight, no mere privation of light, but an aggressive and active power opposed to the abodes lightened by God's presence and favor. Here, again, we feel how important it was that the utter blankness of a death without sensation, followed by no awakening, should be realized, in order that the mind might, in its recoil, grasp the hope of immortality. *Cook*.

It might seem that Job is now on the high road to renounce God, as Satan had predicted he would do. But Job does not find renouncing God quite so easy a thing. And he enters upon a course in chap. 10 which, though at first it appears to take him a step farther in this direction, is really the beginning of a retreat. He endeavors to set before his mind as broad a view of God as he is able, in order that by thinking of all that he knows of God he may catch the end of some clue to his calamities. This makes him realize how much he is still sure of in regard to God. And first, he cannot doubt that He is all-knowing and omnipotent. But he goes farther. He cannot help seeing in the carefulness and lavish skill with which he was fashioned round about in all his being by the hands of God, not only wisdom, but a gracious benevolence, and in the preservation of his spirit a providence which was good. And he dwells on these things, not in the cold manner of a philosopher making an induction, but with all the fervor of a religious mind, which felt that it had fellowship with the Being whose goodness it experienced, and still longed for this fellowship. Yet God's present treat-

ment of him seemed in contradiction to all this. Thus Job balances God against Himself. Yet there is no other method by which he can reach the light ; and though the balance inclines in one direction meantime, by and by it will incline in another. A. B. D.

CHAPTER XI.

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| <p>1 THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,
 2 Should not the multitude of words be answered ?
 And should a man full of talk be justified ?
 3 Should thy boastings make men hold their peace ?
 And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed ?
 4 For thou sayest, My doctrine is pure, And I am clean in thine eyes.
 5 But Oh that God would speak, And open his lips against thee ;
 6 And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom,
 For he is manifold in understanding !
 Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.
 7 Canst thou by searching find out God ?
 Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ?
 8 It is high as heaven ; what canst thou do ?
 Deeper than Sheol ; what canst thou know ?
 9 The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
 And broader than the sea.
 10 If he pass through, and shut up,
 And call unto judgment, then who can hinder him ?
 11 For he knoweth vain men :</p> | <p>He seeth iniquity also, even though he consider it not.
 12 But vain man is void of understanding,
 Yea, man is born <i>as</i> a wild ass's colt.
 13 If thou set thine heart aright,
 And stretch out thine hands toward him ;
 14 If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away,
 And let not unrighteousness dwell in thy tents ;
 15 Surely then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot ;
 Yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear :
 16 For thou shalt forget thy misery ;
 Thou shalt remember it as waters that are passed away :
 17 And <i>thy</i> life shall be clearer than the noon-day ;
 Though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning.
 18 And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope ;
 Yea, thou shalt search <i>about thee</i>, and shalt take thy west in safety.
 19 Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid ;
 Yea, many shall make suit unto thee.
 20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail,
 And they shall have no way to flee,
 And their hope shall be the giving up of the ghost.</p> |
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ONE after another, these officious friends take up their argument against Job ; and one after another they repeat the same commonplaces of their creed. God is just, and, therefore, God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. If a man suffers, he suffers because he deserves it. If you do not concede this, they say you arraign the justice of God. Job may have been apparently moral, upright, religious, but he must have cherished some secret sin ; and it is this which has called down upon him the vengeance of the Most High. This is their compendious system of theology. But it is not large enough to cover the facts. You cannot sum in little the mysteries of the universe.

You cannot still the anguish of beating hearts, crying out for God in their desolate misery, by giving them the dead, dry sand of some formula which you presumptuously label as the truth. It is all too little ; the facts of God's world are too broad for your system. " Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind ? Neither did this man sin, nor his parents ; but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." *Perowne*.

Zophar the Naamathite shows a more rude and less cultivated and proportionately a more heated character than the other two. He is the most inveterate of Job's accusers, and he speaks wholly without feeling or pity. In substantial

argument, he does little more than repeat what Bildad has already said ; indeed, his speeches are made up rather of invectives and reproaches than of new ideas and reasonings. In his second speech—and he has one speech less than the others, probably because he could find nothing more to say—he betrays manifest signs of exhaustion of matter, without any abatement of wrathfulness ; he again repeats with exaggeration what had already been said ; and he certainly does himself justice in being the first to give over speaking, for it was his turn to answer Job, when it is stated, in 32 : 1, that “these three men ceased to answer Job.” In this first speech Zophar falls upon Job open-mouthed, with censures still less veiled than those of his predecessors. He sneers at him for his loquaciousness, denounces him for his lies, and explicitly charges him with the renunciation of God, or at least with gross impiety in daring to assert his own innocence, when the Lord’s righteous judgments so plainly declare what he is. They had heard enough of Job’s estimate of his own character ; and Zophar much wishes that the Lord would disclose to him His estimate of it. But, indeed, He had already done so by these His judgments, and doubtless God had exacted far less from him than his iniquity deserved. *Kitto*.

2, 3. Zophar’s indignation rises still higher than that of the others ; being a narrower man, his views are correspondingly more intense and dogmatic. With no pretence of courtesy, he characterizes Job as a “man of lips,” whose words are mere babbling and mocking. J. F. G.

4. He charges him with saying, *I am clean in Thine eyes*. Job had not said so : he had, indeed, said, *Thou knowest that I am not wicked* (10 : 7), but he had also said, *I have sinned*, and never pretended to a spotless perfection. He had, indeed, maintained that he was not a hypocrite, as they charged him ; but to infer thence that he would not own himself a sinner was an unfair insinuation. We ought to put the best construction on the words and actions of our brethren that they will bear ; but contenders are tempted to put the worst. H.

5, 6. The words put into Job’s mouth (v. 4) give rather Zophar’s brief summary of all the previous speeches of Job ; since he, the person attacked, spoke more like a teacher than a repentant learner, it seemed to Zophar as if he considered both his doctrine and his life quite unimpeachable before God. Both assumptions, particularly the first, incense him (Zophar) so that he immediately desires the revelation of

God to convince Job, by the display of perfect wisdom and knowledge, that God still *causeth much of his guilt to be forgotten*—that is, punishes him for less than he deserves according to strict justice. *Ewald*.—Observe how the friends have gathered heat as they proceeded. Eliphaz was courteous and indirect, exhorting merely to repentance ; Bildad spoke of the sons’ calamity as just ; Zophar finds Job’s punishment less than his desert. J. F. G.

7-12. Panegyric on the Divine wisdom or omniscience. This wisdom cannot be fathomed by man (v. 7). It fills all things (vs. 8, 9). And this explains the sudden calamities that befall men, for God perceives their hidden wickedness (vs. 10, 11). But man is of no understanding (v. 12). A. B. D.—Zophar launches forth into a very noble declaration of the greatness of God and the unsearchable wisdom of all His ways, whence he argues not only the folly but the inexpressible presumption of questioning His dealings with man or of refusing to acquiesce in His appointments. This portion of Zophar’s discourse “forms one of the most noted Bible passages for reference and repetition in all ages.” It will be observed that in it Zophar makes no attempt to *explain* the equity of the Lord’s dealings with man, but he dwells on the greatness and sovereignty of God, and hence deduces the duty of man to submit with humbleness to His decrees. And certain it is that the more any one is enabled to realize to his own soul a sense of the Divine perfections, the less possible it will be for him to allow a rebellious sigh to arise, even under the severest pressure of the Lord’s afflictive dispensations. *Kitto*.—Nothing can be more beautiful or true than these words abstractly considered ; and it is only Zophar’s point of view that makes them convict Job of presumption. Job has been trying to find merely what concerns him as a responsible being, something that he feels he has a right to know if he is judged on grounds of mere justice ; but Zophar identifies this with presumptuous curiosity about God’s hidden ways. J. F. G.

7. The verse means, Canst thou fathom or conceive God ? The special side of God’s being, which Zophar declares to be unfathomable, is His wisdom or omniscience. This is the point in question, for it is this which discovers Job’s heart and his sins ; and Zophar desires to put this omniscience before Job to bring him to take a right place before it, just as Eliphaz brought the holiness of God before him. Literally the verse reads : Canst thou find the deeps of (or, that which has to be searched out in) God, canst

thou reach to the perfection (the outmost, the ground of the nature) of the Almighty?

8. His wisdom is immeasurable, unfathomable. The words are an exclamation: heights of heaven! what canst thou do?—thou art impotent before it to scale it or reach it. A. B. D. —Literally, “heights of heaven; what doest thou? deeper than hell, what knowest thou?” *i.e.*, The wisdom of God is as the heights of heaven, how canst thou reach it? deeper than Sheol, how canst thou comprehend it? *Cook*.

As there is a foolish wisdom, so there is a wise ignorance in not prying into God’s ark nor inquiring into things not revealed. I would fain know all that I need and all that I may; I leave God’s secrets to Himself. It is happy for me that God makes me one of His court, though not of His council. *Bishop H.*—To pry into the maze of His counsels, is not only folly in man but presumption even in angels; like us, they are His servants, not His senators; He holds no council but that mystic one of the Trinity, wherein though there be three persons, there is but one mind, that decrees without contradiction; nor needs He any; His actions are not begot with deliberation, His wisdom naturally knows what is best; His intellect stands ready fraught with the superlative and purest ideas of goodness; consultation and election, which are two motions in us, make but one in Him, His actions springing from His power at the first touch of His will. *Browne*.

How the Divine Being Himself exists in an essential and eternal nature of His own, without beginning as well as without end; how He can be present at the same moment in every point of illimitable space, without excluding any one of His creatures from the room it occupies; how, unseen, unfelt by all, He can maintain a pervading and intimate acquaintance and contact with all parts and portions of the universe; how He can be at once all eye, all ear, all presence, all energy, yet interfere with none of the perceptions and actions of His creatures—this is what equally baffles the mightiest and the meanest intellect; this is the great mystery of the universe, which is at once the most certain and the most incomprehensible of all things—a truth at once enveloped in a flood of light and an abyss of darkness! Inexplicable itself, it explains all besides; it casts a clearness on every question, accounts for every phenomenon, solves every problem, illuminates every depth, and renders the whole mystery of existence as perfectly simple as it is otherwise perfectly unintelligible, while itself *alone* remains in impenetrable obscurity! After displacing every other

difficulty, it remains the greatest of all, in solitary, unsurmountable, unapproachable grandeur! *R. Hall*.

Does the aspect of nature contradict this doctrine? Who will presume to deny that the incomprehensible materialism about us, to say nothing of the more incomprehensible spiritualism within us, is just what one would expect to find issuing from the hands of an incomprehensible Creator—a being mysteriously without a beginning, mysteriously self-existent, mysteriously able to make the greatest and noblest things out of nothing by simple volition, mysteriously all-knowing, mysteriously unfettered in the application of His power and knowledge by all conditions of space and duration and personal presence, mysteriously three in one—in short, a being enveloped in a terrible pomp and majesty of sunset-clouds, whose broken lines never permit the orb that glorifies them to appear, even for a moment, in clear and golden contour on our rapt sight. Such a being, setting out to create, would be *likely* to give us the present enigmatic universe—nay, would be *sure* to give it. If a Jehovah build the temple of nature at all, He will found it on mysteries, frame it with mysteries, cover and dome it with mysteries, pave and ceil it with a mosaic of mysteries—surely He will. And when I am *told* of a being whose own nature is an overwhelming problem; whose attributes have no horizon, no zenith, and no nadir; whose ends respect all possible objects and interests, and spread themselves out in plans of boundless vastness whose merest corners and differentials only are visible to men of the widest scope; when I am told of Him, and I then place myself out under nature’s open dome, amid its protean inscrutableness of leaf and star, of whole crowded earth and circumventing heavens—the peopled heavens where sweep in inextricable maze the hurricane hosts of advancing and retreating orbs; and open my soul candidly to all their silent suggestions and magnetisms—I feel myself drinking in faith, as the fleece spread out under the stars drinks in the dew—I feel that the facts give embracing arms to the doctrine; that the actual universe, instead of swearing with decisive voice and hand uplift to heaven that there is no inscrutable God, significantly asks with panting whisper and color that comes and goes, “Is there *not* such a being?” *Burr*.

If the longer man stretches his line, the deeper this awful ocean of life becomes; if the farther his telescope penetrates the heavens, and his microscope the earth, the more entirely are all his speculations distanced by the magnificence

and wisdom of the scene ; if the more searching his analysis into principles and second causes, he utterly fails to see *through* them—he always finds back of all researches a mysterious power which it is utterly impossible for him to grasp or comprehend ; if he finds that there is a limit to his knowledge, not from the shallowness of the subjects but from the nature of his own mental faculties, and that the smallest flower that springs up at his feet hath that within it which eludes the most intense vision of the most vigorous intellect ; if he sees this to be true, not in one or two instances, but in every instance, that there is a plastic power which ascends from stones to stars, and pervades all creation in its wondrous subtilty and influence, then he is obliged to believe—then he is brought face to face with an infinite being, whom by searching it is impossible to find out unto perfection ; and so the tendency—the uncounteracted force of these material studies is to bear him onward to a sublime faith in the eternal Creator, and prepare his mind for the reception of whatever further light He may see fit to shed upon his soul. Thus the “unlocking of the gates of sense” is made ultimately to unlock the gates of the spirit to the entrance of the grandest views of the infinite Lord. The march of science, other things being equal, will be the triumph of a lofty and intelligent faith. Who have been the famous patriarchs of infidelity, the grand masters in this temple of nightshade ? Were they Copernicus and Galileo, the Bacons and Kepler and Newton, and a host of such bright names ; the naturalists to whom all eyes at once turn with reverence, whose amazing toils created a new world of science, and gave an upward impulse to the human mind, and set in motion that train of causes whose results are our daily wonder and thanksgiving ? Or were they not such men as Bolingbroke and Hume and Gibbon and Voltaire and Paine, the speculators, the moral and political philosophers ; men who set reason above facts, or made the facts bend to their logic ? And in these latter days, whence sprang that mystic rationalism which spirits away Christianity in a fog of doubts, of myths and fables, and degrades the chief revelation of the Infinite to a level with the Iliad of Homer and the theogony of Hesiod ? Came it from Davy and Herschel and Cuvier and Humboldt, the grandest naturalists of their day ? or came it not from the brains of a Kant, a Hegel, a Strauss, and others of like character, the men who spin their theories not out of the heavens and the earth, but out of their own benighted intellects ? What form of infi-

delity at this day is most rampant, insinuating, plastic, and intractable ? Comes it from natural philosophy, or astronomy, or geology ? or comes it not from a false philology which misinterprets Scripture, and a false philosophy which misinterprets life and its great ends ? *Eug. Rev.*

If I may thoroughly *know* God, I must cease to *worship* Him. I cannot *adore* what I can *measure*. If His plans are within my comprehension, they are finite. If there is nothing in God which I cannot find out by searching, then God is finite and is not God. He lets me feel the touch of His hand, He daily compasses me with His love, He draws sharply for me the great outlines of His character, He restrains and forms me by His law, He teaches me by His providence, guides me by His wisdom, upholds and saves me by His power. But while there is thus a side of revelation in contact with me and daily available for me, I must never forget that it is *only* a side ; that God’s revelation is not God, but, as it were, a line of light on the verge of a narrow horizon, beyond which lie depths and glories of Divine Being unconceived and inconceivable by the heart of man. V.

Well may the prudent consideration of what hath been said concerning the depth of Divine omniscience put the wisest of men in mind of their nescience ; keep them from leaning to their own understandings, and give them just occasion to think of an answer to Zophar’s question : “What canst thou know ?” If the secrets of nature do so puzzle thee, what canst thou know concerning those much greater secrets of grace and glory of which Luther very excellently says : “Philosophy receives them not, faith doth. The authority of Scripture is greater by far than the capacity of our wit ; and the Holy Ghost than Aristotle” ? Well may the depth of Divine understanding, which the Psalmist saith is infinite—“Great is the Lord, and of great power ; His understanding is infinite”—cause us to reflect upon the shallowness, the infiniteness—yea, the folly of our own knowledge. *Arrow-smith.*

10-12. God’s mode of trial is summary, because infallible. He knows altogether the people who disguise their moral nothingness, and sees the falseness of those who persist in their worthlessness. He knows and sees this moral wretchedness at once, and need not first of all reflect upon it. *Delitzsch.*—He needs no lengthened observation, He seeth at once into the ground of the heart, His wisdom is direct intuition, absolute and perfect. *Cook.*

13-19. Zophar still treats Job as wicked, but lets it appear that he does not regard him

as hopelessly reprobate, and assures him that by repentance and prayer he may yet reconcile himself to God, and through His blessing be restored to a prosperous state. *Then*, he says,

‘Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away’—forget it, or have that unpainful recollection of it which is a species of forgetfulness. *Kitto*.—The condition—sincere repentance and confession—must be immediately and afresh more emphatically conditioned by another one which is, in point of fact, earlier—the removal of all previous unrighteousness (restitution). As the happy consequences of the fulfilment of these conditions appears a new, confident, and cheerful courage; and, afterward, increased prosperity, with a rest not to be disturbed by danger. *Ewald*.

The picture which Zophar draws of Job’s restored prosperity is beautiful. Trouble shall be forgotten, or remembered as waters that are passed away; and the memory of a past trouble that cannot recur, but makes the present happiness greater (v. 16). And the future shall rise brighter than noon · or, it may be, shall increase toward brightness more than the noon does, showing an ever-growing clearness; and if it be at any time clouded, as in any life, however clear, there are clouds, the darkness shall only be a lesser light, like that of the morning; or, as the words may mean, the darkness shall only be like the fixed changes of nature, and shall give place, like the night, to a fair and hopeful morning (v. 17). Thus restored to the fixed order of a life with God, he shall be trustful, because there is hope, and he shall look about, surveying all things, and finding nothing to dread, shall lie down in confidence (v. 18); and when lain down, he shall rest peacefully. And his security and prosperity shall draw to him the homage of many, who (as before) shall seek his favor (v. 19).

20. Zophar concludes by setting in opposition to this picture another, the fate of the wicked. A. B. D.—Their hope will perish and expire as a man does when he gives up the ghost; it will fail them when they have most need of it, and when they expected the accomplishment of it; it will die away and leave them in utter confusion. They shall not avoid the evil which sometimes they frighten themselves with the apprehension of; they shall not escape the execution of the sentence passed upon them; can neither outbrave it nor outrun it. Those that will not fly *to* God will find it in vain to think of flying *from* him. H.—Foolish self-love makes men unwilling to know the worst of themselves, and so causeth them to presume

and keep up false deceiving hopes that they may be saved. They know that all is not well with them, but they hope God is merciful, that He will not condemn them; or they hope to be converted some time hereafter; or they hope that less ado may serve their turn, and that their good wishes and prayers may save their souls; and in these hopes they hold on till they find themselves to be past remedy, and their hopes and they be dead together. I speak not this without the Scripture (Prov. 11 : 17; Job 27 : 8, 9; 11 : 20). There is scarcely a greater hindrance of conversion than these false, deceiving hopes of sinners. *Baxter*.

Verse 7. Sound doctrine is the fruit of righteousness. Christ so puts it. “If you do My will, you shall know of the doctrine.” Obedience comes before knowledge in the school of Christ, as in every other. “Canst thou by *searching* find out God?” No, you never will. Those who intellectually seek Him lose Him. But “I am found of them that sought Me not,” He says. Simple obedience is the guide-board to God and to heaven. We can learn more about God in one hour, by bowing at His feet and receiving the benediction of Divine forgiveness through Christ, than by a lifetime of poring over tomes of divinity. *Interior*.

The effect of this discourse could only be to exasperate Job; it states in the most distinct and offensive form what the other two had suggested or insinuated, and far from admitting the possibility of Job’s purity and uprightness, asserts that his guilt has not yet been fully punished. His hands are supposed to be full of iniquity, his tent of ill-gotten spoils, his face spotted with ignominy. (See v. 15.) The hope which it seems to suggest is nugatory, since it could only be realized after a change which implies previous guilt of the deepest dye, of which Job’s conscience acquitted him. *Cook*.

Like the others, Zophar regards the retributive justice of God as the principle on which alone the Divine government of the world is exercised, and to which every act of this government is to be attributed. This limited view which the friends take in the matter readily accounts for the brevity of their speeches in comparison with Job’s. This one common ground is their only theme, which they reiterate constantly in some new and modified form, while the mind of Job is an exhaustless fountain of thought, suggested by the direct experience of the past. Before

the present dispensation of suffering came upon Job he enjoyed the peace of true godliness, and all his thoughts and feelings were under the control of a consciousness made certain by his experience that God makes Himself known to those who fear Him. Now, however, his nature, hitherto (in the absence of any severe strain upon his faith) kept in subjection by Divine grace, is let loose in him ; the powers of doubt, mistrust, impatience, and despondency have risen up ; his inner life is fallen into the anarchy of conflict ; his mind, hitherto peaceful and well disciplined, is become a wild, chaotic confusion ; and hence his speeches, in comparison with those of the friends, are as roaring cataracts to small confined streams. The new truth, the solution of the mystery, springs from this spiritual battle which Job has to fight, and from which, although not scathless, he shall come forth as conqueror. On Zophar's side it is maintained that God always acts in accordance with justice, and Job maintains that God does not always so act. The maxims of the

friends (while fundamentally correct) are false in the exclusiveness with which they maintain them, (but) the exclusiveness to which they are urged gives evidence of the fallacy of the premises ; they must condemn Job, and consequently become unjust, in order to rescue the justice of God. Job's maxim, on the other hand, is true, but it is so unconnected as it stands (in what he says) that it may be turned over any moment and changed into a falsehood. For that God does not act solely as the Just One, that He does not exercise His *justice* without respect to His other attributes, is a truth ; but to say that He sometimes acts unjustly is blasphemy. Job's steadfast consciousness of his innocence proves to him that God does not always act simply as the Just One ; shall he therefore suppose that God deals unjustly with him ? From this blasphemous inversion of his maxim Job seeks refuge in the absolute power of God, which (he assumes) makes that just which is unjust according to the clearest *human* consciousness. *Delitzsch.*

CHAPTER XII.

- 1 THEN Job answered and said,
- 2 No doubt but ye are the people,
And wisdom shall die with you.
- 3 But I have understanding as well as you ;
I am not inferior to you .
Yea, who knoweth not such things as these ?
- 4 I am as one that is a laughing-stock to his
neighbour,
I who called upon God and he answered :
The just, the perfect man is a laughing-
stock.
- 5 In the thought of him that is at ease there is
contempt for misfortune ;
It is ready for them whose foot slippeth.
- 6 The tents of robbers prosper,
And they that provoke God are secure ;
Into whose hand God bringeth *abundantly*.
- 7 But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach
thee ;
And the fowls of the air, and they shall tell
thee :
8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach
thee ;
And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto
thee.
- 9 Who knoweth not in all these,

- That the hand of the LORD hath wrought
this ?
- 10 In whose hand is the soul of every living
thing,
And the breath of all mankind.
- 11 Doth not the ear try words,
Even as the palate tasteth its meat ?
- 12 With aged men is wisdom,
And in length of days understanding.
- 13 With him is wisdom and might ;
He hath counsel and understanding.
- 14 Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be
built again ;
He shutteth up a man, and there can be no
opening.
- 15 Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they
dry up ;
Again, he sendeth them out, and they over-
turn the earth.
- 16 With him is strength and effectual work-
ing ;
The deceived and the deceiver are his.
- 17 He leadeth counsellors away spoiled,
And judges maketh he fools.
- 18 He looseth the bond of kings,
And bindeth their loins with a girdle.

- 19 He leadeth priests away spoiled,
And overthroweth the mighty.
20 He removeth the speech of the trusty,
And taketh away the understanding of the
elders.
21 He poureth contempt upon princes,
And looseth the belt of the strong.
22 He discovereth deep things out of darkness,
And bringeth out to light the shadow of
death.

- 23 He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth
them :
He spreadeth the nations abroad, and leadeth
them *captive*.
24 He taketh away understanding from the
chiefs of the people of the earth,
And causeth them to wander in a wilderness
where there is no way.
25 They grope in the dark without light,
And he maketh them to stagger like a drunk-
en man.

Chaps. 12-14. Job's reply to Zophar's short address extends through three chapters. It is highly animated, and almost exhaustive of the argument he maintains. He enters more keenly into the spirit of the debate as an argument, and is hence drawn somewhat more out of himself than hitherto, and goes further afield in thought and illustration. He is also more bold as well as more keen in recrimination, indulging occasionally in biting sarcasms, and at times displaying a little personal exasperation. In this discourse he with great ability takes up the very doctrine of God's sovereignty, which Zophar had so forcibly set forth and urged as a ground of submission, and presses it into the support of his own view, arguing that this sovereignty was shown by God's acting from His own absolute will in the government of the world, far more than by His being bound by the conditions of merit or demerit in man, as they affirm. Nothing, therefore, which the friends could advance on the subject of the Divine power and greatness could prove him guilty, or make out that he was subjected to punishment for his sins. *Kitto*.

In these chapters Job sums up the result of the first colloquy ; chap. 12 : 1-6 contains a bitter reproof of the speaker's arrogance and pitilessness, with a reassertion of the statement that the good suffer and the wicked prosper. Vs. 7-25 : All results, whether good or evil, must be attributed to God, whose hand hath wrought it all, and upon whom all things living absolutely depend. In this passage Job admits what has been said of the unsearchableness and omnipotence of God, but draws from it the inference that He causes all the evils which are found in the world. In the next place (13 : 1-12), Job charges his friends with falsehood, and with a base and cowardly attempt to vindicate a course of things which is manifestly inconsistent with the attributes of righteousness. In all this it is evident that Job argues simply from the facts as they come before him ; having no clew to the secret of the visitation by which he is reduced

to such misery, he sees in it but an absolutely inscrutable dispensation, and rejects all attempts to account for it by facts within the scope of human experience as vain and foolish. He knows that the supposition that he is himself inwardly false, godless, and hypocritical is quite groundless ; he does not believe that his friends really think that goodness and prosperity are inseparable ; he scorns the mean spirit which can profess to be satisfied with a fallacy, and he threatens them with God's wrath for such mockery. The following passage (vs. 13-19) is in another tone ; Job declares that although he can neither comprehend the visitation nor hope for deliverance, still his trust is unshaken—" though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ;" he will neither give up trust in God nor his own integrity ; he then (vs. 20-28) pleads directly with God, asks for light only, only to know why he is thus condemned, what is the special sin ; and from the frailty and misery of man he draws a plea for pity and respite (14 : 1-12), since life once lost is irrecoverable, till the heavens be no more there will be no awakening from that sleep (vs. 13-28). In this passage comes the first gleam of a hope, a dim, uncertain feeling which was afterward to be developed. Job expresses a desire that he may lie in the grave until the time of wrath be past away ; he would then wait patiently for his change, with a certainty that God would have a desire to the work of His own hands. As for any other hope, he rejects it altogether ; all that is in the world must perish ; man passeth away from it, and forever ; what may be the lot of his posterity he cannot know ; all that is sure for himself in this life is pain and misery. The whole argument may thus be summed up in a few points. The correlation between goodness and prosperity assumed by his friends does not rest on facts ; whatever evils exist in the universe come from God's work ; all attempts to frame a theodicea for this life are false and sophistical ; all that a good man can do is to retain trust in God, though without hope of living to see the cause

of right triumph ; the sense of inner weakness, past and present sinfulness, will find expression in prayer, but a consideration of the shortness of life, its wretchedness, its hopeless end, brings out an aspiration, developed by spiritual affliction into a hope of a restoration to life, and of a last judgment, which must issue in the perfect establishment of the right. *Cook.*

Chap. 12. Hitherto Job's attitude toward his friends has been that of unquestioning assent. Agreeing with all their assertions, he has endeavored, but wholly without result, to make their philosophy explain these perplexing facts. Now that all three have spoken, however, and revealed their uniform drift, the barrenness of their generalizations flashes upon him, and he sees that they have not touched the difficulties of the case at all. They have urged no more than he has always known. From this point his attitude toward them changes. They no longer stand to him as representatives of wisdom ; and ceasing to arraign God, he arraigns the friends instead. *J. G. F.*

1-3. He begins with a sarcastic remark upon his friends' intense appreciation of their own wisdom, and ventures to distrust its quality, seeing that it had not led them to show manly pity and compassion for a friend in severe distress. Deriding their pretensions, he declares that he had no need to come to them for instruction, but had at least as much knowledge of the matters in debate as they had. He declares that all they had said upon the wisdom and power of God was merely trite and obvious ; and then, as if to prove that they could boast no superiority of view in this respect, he breaks out into a most eloquent discourse on the same subject—the power and providence of God—which is certainly not inferior to theirs in matter, while it exceeds them in *freshness* of sentiment and illustration. *Kitto.*

4. I who called upon God, and He answered. If our friends be deaf to our complaints, God is not ; if they condemn us, God knows our integrity ; if they make the worst of us, He will make the best of us ; if they give us cross answers, He will give us kind ones.

6. Job's friends, all of them, went upon this principle, that wicked people cannot prosper long in this world, but some remarkable judgment or other will suddenly light on them ; Zophar had concluded with it, that *the eyes of the wicked shall fail* (11 : 20). This principle Job here opposes, and asserts as an undoubted truth that wicked people may, and often do, prosper long in this world. Even great sinners may enjoy great prosperity. We cannot, there-

fore, judge of men's piety by their plenty, nor of what they have in their heart by what they have in their hand. *H.*

7-9. Job takes up and iterates what is true in the views of the friends, at the same time broadening its application. Everything, both good and evil, is in God's hands ; no Eliphaz's vision, or Bildad's traditional wisdom, or Zophar's occult philosophy, is needed to prove that ; the commonest things teach it. *J. F. G.* —Such knowledge as the friends possessed of God's wisdom and power, and their action in the world, could be learned by any one who had eyes to observe the life and fate of the lower creatures. In all may be seen God's absolute might and sway prevailing. *Davidson.* —All these creatures, though without reason and speech, still utter a language which is heard by every intelligent man. They do not even possess knowledge, but they offer instruction, and are a means of knowledge. Creation is the school of knowledge, and man is the learner ; and this knowledge forces itself upon one's attention. *Delitzsch.*

The great lesson which the animal creation, regarded simply as the creature and subject of God, is fitted to teach us is a lesson of the wisdom, and power, and constant beneficence of God. Job sends us to the animal creation that we may gather from it instances of the greatness of the Creator's hand and the constancy of the Creator's providence. For every creature there is a place, and to this each is adapted with transcendent skill and beneficence. Nowhere do we detect a fault or a flaw amid all these teeming myriads. All are perfectly complete, and attest the majesty of Him by whose hand they have been formed. Consider the lessons which the lower animals are fitted to teach us by the way in which they spend their life and use the powers which God has given them. They constantly and unceasingly fulfil the end of their being. Be their sphere large or small, they always occupy it to the full. What a lesson is here addressed to man, and what a rebuke to him for the studied and persevering neglect he manifests of the purpose for which God has made him and sent him into the world ! The lower animals are seen always to live according to their nature. They neither transgress that nature, nor do they fall short of it. Can this be said of man ? How far is the best from yielding his entire nature in its symmetry and its fulness to what truth and righteousness demand of him ! The lower animals teach us to seek happiness according to our nature and capacity. *W. L. A.*

10. Every living thing. Life everywhere ! on the earth, in the earth, crawling, creeping, burrowing, boring, leaping, running, flying. If the sequestered coolness of the wood tempt us to saunter into its checkered shade, we are saluted by the murmurous din of insects, the twitter of birds, the scrambling of squirrels, the startled rush of unseen beasts, all telling how populous is this seeming solitude. If we pause before a tree, or shrub, or plant, our cursory and half-abstracted glance detects a colony of various inhabitants. We pick up a fallen leaf, and if nothing is visible on it, there is probably the trace of an insect larva hidden in its tissue, and awaiting there development. The drop of dew upon this leaf will probably contain its animals, visible under the microscope. This same microscope reveals that the "blood-rain" suddenly appearing on bread and awakening superstitious terrors is nothing but a collection of minute animals ; and that the vast tracts of snow which are reddened in a single night owe their color to the marvellous rapidity in reproduction of a minute plant. The very mould which covers our bread, our jam, or our ink, and disfigures our damp walls, is nothing but a collection of plants. The many-colored fire which sparkles on the surface of a summer sea at night, as the vessel ploughs her way, or which drips from the oars in lines of jewelled light, is produced by millions of minute animals. Nor does the vast procession end here. Our very mother-earth is formed of the *débris* of life. We dig downward thousands of feet below the surface, and discover with surprise the skeletons of strange, uncouth animals which roamed the fens and struggled through the woods before man was. Our surprise is heightened when we learn that the very quarry itself is mainly composed of the skeletons of microscopic animals. The flints which grate beneath our carriage wheels are but the remains of countless skeletons. The Apennines and Cordilleras, the chalk cliffs of England—these are the pyramids of bygone generations of atomies. Ages ago these tiny architects secreted the tiny shells which were their palaces ; from the ruins we build our Parthenons, our St. Peters, and our Louvres. So revolves the luminous orb of life ! Generations follow generations ; and the present becomes the matrix of the future, as the past was of the present—the life of one epoch forming the prelude to a higher life. *G. II. Lewes.*

11. The mind of man has as good a faculty of discerning between truth and error, when duly stated, as the palate has of discerning be-

tween what is sweet and what is bitter. He therefore demands from his friends a liberty to judge for himself of what they had said ; and desires them to use the same liberty in judging of what he had said ; nay, he seems to appeal to any man's impartial judgment in this controversy ; let the ear try the words on both sides, and it would be found that he was in the right. *H.*

12-25. A very eloquent description of the Divine power and wisdom begins to flow from the lips of the afflicted man. He makes this description not in mere rivalry with the friends, but with far superior power and wealth of ideas, this far surpassing in point of wealth and copiousness his earlier description (9 : 4-10). Nor does he here repeat the fine illustrations which he had used in his previous speech, but applies with extreme skill the details of his description precisely to the present case, doing this without any express indication of it, but yet quite perceptibly. For, while he could have described the power of God and His wisdom, which, according to the feelings of the ancients, displayed itself more particularly in enigmas and marvels, in various ways dwelling very much upon most various things, in which the ancient world felt the mysterious, hidden wisdom and power of God, he takes another course, and designedly brings forward partly the great vicissitudes in human affairs, according to which God sends both weal and woe, prosperity and disaster, and partly the experience that even the wisest of the earth may easily become fools before God and get into helpless perplexity. The first phenomenon the opponents will do well to give heed to, since the cause of Job's misfortune may, after all, be another one hidden from men ; the latter let them apply to themselves, and at the same time remember that at last God can bring all hidden things into the light. *Ewald.*

The design of this grand discourse on the ways of God to men is, I apprehend, to establish his position (9 : 22). "He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked." He allegeth those great and general calamities, drought, inundation, and the overthrow of kingdoms ; which make no distinction between the innocent and the guilty, but involve the most virtuous characters, and the noblest and most important talents, in distress, disgrace, and ruin. *Scott.*

15. Great droughts are sometimes great judgments ; he *withholds the waters, and they dry up* ; if the heaven be as brass, the earth is as iron ; if the rain be denied, fountains dry up and their streams are wanted, fields are parched and their

fruits are wanted. Great wet is sometimes a great judgment ; He raises the waters and overturns the earth, the productions of it, the buildings upon it. A sweeping rain is said to *leave no food* (Prov. 28:3). How many ways God has of contending with a sinful people, and taking from them abused, forfeited mercies ; and how utterly unable we are to contend with Him ! H.

16. *The deceived and the deceiver are His.* God will make both the deceiver and the deceived accountable to Himself ; it is from His sufferance that there are any such ; in infinite wisdom and holiness He disposeth of the errors of men and of those that lead them into error, ordering how far any man shall deceive, and to what extent his deceit shall prevail ; and, further, the Lord improves both to serve His own ends, to bring about His counsels and promote his own glory. *Caryl.*

17-23. He gives many instances of God's management of the children of men, crossing their purposes, and serving His own by them and upon them, overruling all their counsels,

overpowering all their attempts, and overcoming all their oppositions. What changes does God make with men, what turns does He give to them ; how easily, how surprisingly !

24, 25. They that were driving on their projects with full speed are strangely bewildered and at a loss ; they know not where they are nor what they do, are unsteady in their counsels, and uncertain in their motions, off and on, this way and that way, wandering like men in a desert, groping like men in the dark, and staggering like men in drink. God can soon non-plus the deepest politicians, and bring the greatest wits to their wits' end—to show that wherein they deal proudly, he is above them. Thus are the revolutions of kingdoms wonderfully brought about by an overruling Providence. Heaven and earth are shaken, but the Lord sits King forever, and with Him we look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken. H.

Job has thus accurately defined how far he and the friends are at one ; they agree in ascribing all events to God. But from this point their paths diverge. J. F. G.

CHAPTER XIII.

- 1 Lo, mine eye hath seen all *this*,
Mine ear hath heard and understood it.
- 2 What ye know, *the same* do I know also :
I am not inferior unto you.
- 3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to reason with God.
- 4 But ye are forgers of lies,
Ye are all physicians of no value.
- 5 Oh that ye would altogether hold your peace !
And it should be your wisdom.
- 6 Hear now my reasoning,
And hearken to the pleadings of my lips.
- 7 Will ye speak unrighteously for God,
And talk deceitfully for him ?
- 8 Will ye show partiality to him ?
Will ye contend for God ?
- 9 Is it good that he should search you out ?
Or as one deceiveth a man, will ye deceive him ?
- 10 He will surely reprove you,
If ye do secretly show partiality.
- 11 Shall not his majesty make you afraid,
And his dread fall upon you ?
- 12 Your memorable sayings *are* proverbs of
ashes,
Your defences *are* defences of clay.

- 13 Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may
speak,
And let come on me what will.
- 14 Wherefore should I take my flesh in my teeth,
And put my life in mine hand ?
- 15 Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him :
Nevertheless I will maintain my ways before
him.
- 16 This also shall be my salvation,
That a godless man shall not come before him.
- 17 Hear diligently my speech,
And let my declaration be in your ears.
- 18 Behold now, I have set my cause in order ;
I know that I shall be justified.
- 19 Who is he that will contend with me ?
For then would I hold my peace and give up
the ghost.
- 20 Only do not two things unto me,
Then will I not hide myself from thy face :
- 21 Withdraw thine hand far from me ;
And let not thy terror make me afraid.
- 22 Then call thou, and I will answer ;
Or let me speak, and answer thou me.
- 23 How many are mine iniquities and sins ?
Make me to know my transgression and my
sin.

24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And holdest me for thine enemy ?
25 Wilt thou harass a driven leaf ?
And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble ?
26 For thou writest bitter things against me,
And makest me to inherit the iniquities of
my youth :

27 Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and
markest all my paths ;
Thou settest a bound to the soles of my
feet :
28 Though I am like a rotten thing that con-
sumeth,
Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

THERE is no pause between this and the preceding chapter ; in the first two verses Job winds up his argument with the words which he used in the beginning of his speech. *Cook.*

1-22. Having finished his delineation of God's might and wisdom as they act in the world, Job looks back upon his picture, saying that he knows all this as well as his friends (vs. 1, 2) ; but his calamities receive thereby no solution. In spite of this knowledge he desires to plead his cause before God (v. 3). And they who sought to use this wisdom and might of God against him were mere forgers of lies, who gave a false as well as feeble explanation of his troubles (vs. 4, 5). They were nothing but partisans for God. And as they had invoked the omniscience of God against him he will threaten them with the judgment of the same God, who will search out their hidden insincerity, and before whom their old maxims will be but "proverbs of ashes" (vs. 6-12). With this stinging rebuke to his friends Job turns from them unto God. He will adventure all and go into His presence to plead his cause, come what may (vs. 13-15). This courage which he feels is token to him that he shall be victorious, for a godless man would not dare to come before God. He knows he shall be found in the right (vs. 16-19). Only he will beg for two conditions : that God would remove His hand from him, and that He would not terrify him by His majesty ; then he is ready to answer if God will call, or to speak if God will answer (vs. 20-22). *A. B. D.*

3. Taking Zophar at his word, Job would invite God's answer by making plea to Him. In the absence of a daysman to represent his cause, Job approaches God directly, as indeed he has approached Him before, but in much better spirit now. *J. F. G.*—This desire to plead with God must be attributed to real inward faith ; the plagues which had fallen on Job confound him ; he cannot reconcile them, or other events in the world's history, with what he believes of God, but they do not drive him from God ; far from renouncing God, he turns away from all other things, comes to Him, and is quite sure that his honesty will be recognized and approved. (See v. 18.) *Cook.*

4. They framed a wrong hypothesis concerning the Divine Providence and misrepresented it, as if it did never remarkably afflict any but wicked men in this world ; and from thence they drew a false judgment concerning Job, that he was certainly a hypocrite. For this gross mistake, both in doctrine and application, he thinks an indictment of forgery lies against them. *H.*—What the friends have said, true though it is, is only the half-truth, which in their application of it has all the effect of a lie. Two essential elements they have ignored—the fact, illustrated by Job's affliction, that man may be punished though righteous ; and the converse, taught by obvious facts, that man may be wicked and prosper. Hence their philosophizings are of no worth at all. *J. F. G.*

5. The advice is not mere irony, it is more than a taunt, for true wisdom teaches in the first place the limits of our knowledge, and the duty of silence when we are really ignorant. *Cook.*

7, 8. He tells them plainly, (1) that God and His cause did not need such advocates—"Will you think to contend for God, as if His justice were clouded and wanted to be cleared up, or as if He were at a loss what to say and wanted you to speak for Him ? Will you, who are so weak and passionate, put in for the honor of pleading God's cause ?" (2) That God's cause suffered by such management. Under pretence of justifying God in afflicting Job, they magisterially condemn him as a hypocrite and a bad man. "This," says he, "is speaking wickedly" (for uncharitableness and censoriousness are wickedness, great wickedness ; it is an offence to God to wrong our brethren), "it is talking deceitfully, for you condemn one whom yet perhaps your own consciences cannot but acquit. Your principles are false and your arguings fallacious ; and will it excuse you to say, *It is for God ?*" *H.*

7-11. Their advocacy of God is an injustice to Job, and an evil service rendered to God, which cannot escape punishment from Him. They set themselves up as God's advocates, and at the same time they are partial in His favor, as they are twice reminded and given

to understand. They conceal their better knowledge by the assumption of an earnest tone and a bearing expressive of the strongest conviction that they are in the right. Such advocacy must be put to shame when He who needs no concealment of the truth for His justification will bring all untruth into the light. *Delitzsch*.—Let them consider what a God He is into whose service they had thus thrust themselves, and to whom they really did so much dis-service, and inquire whether they could give Him a good account of what they did. Let them consider the strictness of His scrutiny and inquiries concerning them, “*Is it good that He should search you out?*” Can you bear to have the principles looked into which you go upon in your censures, and to have the bottom of the matter found out?” It concerns us all seriously to consider whether it will be to our advantage or no that God searches the heart. H.

13-22. Job now turns from his friends, whom he commands to be silent, to his great plea with God, resuming the intention expressed in v. 3. The passage has two parts: one preliminary (vs. 13-16), exhibiting a singular picture of the conflict between resolution and fear in Job’s mind. He will go before God, come upon him what will (v. 13). Yet he cannot hide from himself that it may be at the hazard of his life. Yet he will not be deterred; he will defend his ways to God’s face (vs. 14, 15). And yet again, this very courage which he has, arising from his sense of innocence, is a token to him that he shall be victorious (v. 16). The second part is vs. 17-22. Feeling that the victory is already his, he commands his friends to mark his pleading of his cause. He knows he shall be found in the right. Nay, no one will even plead against him (vs. 17-19). Only he begs two conditions of God—that He would lift His afflicting hand from him, and that He would not affright him with His terror (vs. 20-22). A. B. D.

14. In the first clause Job asks why he should cling to mere life, his torn and mutilated flesh, as with the desperate tenacity of a wild beast; in the latter he resolves to risk his life, to expose himself to any danger in pleading with God.

15. Though He slay me, yet will I wait for Him. Or, *Lo, He may slay me, yet will I wait for Him—i.e., abide hopefully the issue of His judgment.* This appears to be the true sense of the passage. It expresses Job’s own feeling, as is shown distinctly by the next verse, “He shall be my salvation,” about which

no question is raised; it corresponds exactly with the expression in Psalm 38 : 15, a psalm throughout full of reminiscences of Job, and here apparently adopting his very words; the connection of thought is unbroken, whereas the rendering adopted by many commentators introduces an ill-timed exclamation of hopelessness. *Cook*.—Job’s lowest despondency is generally the season when his strangely supported spirit mounts up to the strongest expression of his never-to-be-extinguished hope. *T. Lewis*.

Literally it reads, “Lo, He may slay me, yet will I wait for him,” and the meaning is that, so sure is Job of the justice of his cause, that at the hazard of his life he will vindicate himself before God and wait in sure expectation of a favorable verdict. Our version is a truthful expression of the faith in God’s righteousness which underlies Job’s words. The sentence has become one of the standard formulas of the Christian faith. It expresses the right attitude of the soul toward a God of infinite love and truth, who yet, through the very depth and vast range of His counsels, is sometimes hidden from His children. He that stakes his life on God’s truth will never be the loser. V.

Job’s triumph is, in the most absolute and unqualified manner, the triumph of faith over sense. It would seem as though everything conspired to show that God was persecuting him, and treating him as an enemy. Yet from an angry God he can turn nowhere but back to God Himself, in whom he does and must confide, in spite of His apparent hostility. W. H. G. —Everything is against his trust in God. He has been stricken, terribly stricken, when he had no consciousness that he deserved it. And He who permitted this—instead of appearing to explain the mystery—has hidden Himself from His servant. All around in the darkness does the patriarch grope after Him, but it is in vain. The next blow may cleave him to the ground, but he fears it not. He looks calmly to the threatening cloud. Let it come. It will make no difference in his confidence—“Though He *slay* me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain mine own ways before Him.” *F. Greaves*.

15, 16. To *maintain His ways*, to be true in the face of God and the iron universe to that perfect and upright ideal which has hitherto shaped his life, is in Job’s soul the supreme imperative, compared with which the desire for restored health and property or any earthly happiness never once comes to mention. “There is in man a higher than love of happiness; he

can do without happiness, and instead thereof find blessedness! Was it not to preach forth this same higher that sages and martyrs, the poet and the priest, in all times have spoken and suffered; bearing testimony, through life and through death, of the God-like that is in man, and how in the God-like only has he strength and freedom? . . . Love not pleasure; love God. This is the everlasting Yea, wherein all contradiction is solved; wherein whoso walks and works it is well with him." (*Carlyle*.)—The encounter with the selfishness of his friends has carried Job over from the everlasting No to the everlasting Yea. Farewell now, fear and complaining; farewell, trust in the outworn maxims of men; face to face with death and the worst that his unseen enemy can do, Job turns solemnly from his fellows and commits himself anew to the righteousness that has hitherto been his life, in supreme faith that its issue, though now he sees it not, must be salvation. J. F. G.

If God is worthy to be trusted—and that question is already settled once for all—God is to be trusted always; to be trusted because of what He is, and not merely because of the proofs of his worthiness to be trusted, that are multiplied to us hour by hour. There are times when we cannot understand the ways of God; times when God's ways might be so interpreted as to seem to show a lack of wisdom or a lack of love; but then it is that our trust in God is to be rested on as having a surer basis than our understanding of His present providences. No child of God has, indeed, a true trust in God, unless he can feel and say in all sincerity concerning God, when God's ways are most inscrutable, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." S. S. T.

16. My salvation. This leaves no doubt as to the very innermost feeling of Job. He is sure of salvation, though he knows not how it may be possible, or in what form it may come. *Cook*.—**A godless man shall not come before Him.** A godless man will not dare to go before God; but Job dares and desires; and this courage, sweet evidence to himself of his innocence, he says will be his salvation—that is, will secure him victory in his plea with God. He hardly distinguishes between his own consciousness of innocence and his innocence itself and the proof of it. He is so conscious of it that he is sure it will appear before God. A. B. D.

18. Behold, now have I set in order my cause; I know that I shall be justified. It is an appeal from

the God who works in the impenetrable darkness without to the God who has put holy impulses within, and a trust in the guidance of that honest human heart which "condemns him not." This declaration we may regard as the bed-rock, so to say, of the Book of Job. To appreciate what it means for Job to make it, reflect that the wisdom of man, the testimony of the past, the utterance of trusted friends, have all raised their voice in unison with a mysterious visitation of God to declare the contrary. Job is launching out into the darkness alone, staking life and destiny on the belief that the powers that work unseen, in spite of inexorable appearances, are for righteousness. Doth Job fear God for nought? The sneer of Satan is more than answered. J. F. G.

19. Who will contend with me? Who will oppose me with good reasons—who will bring a valid argument against me? The words are a triumphant expression of the feeling that no one will or can. **For then would I hold my peace, and give up the ghost**—that is, in case any one should appear against him with proof of his sin. The words form a splendid climax to the declaration of his consciousness of innocence. He is sure he shall be found in the right—nay, none will be found to contend with him; if he thought any one could, he would be silent and die. A. B. D.

He is assured God will not maintain the cause against him, will not assert that he really drew upon himself all these calamities; but that if he be mistaken in that conviction, if God really should impute guilt to him, he has no alternative but to lie down and die in silence. There is a strong undercurrent of hope in this, for it is clear that Job is confident that when God speaks it will be in righteousness and love. (See 14 : 15.) *Cook*.—These words indicate how deeply Job's avowal has taken hold of his life. So sure is he of its truth that if it were possible for one to make good the opposite, then life would have no more significance for him; his whole being is committed to this position of his.

20-24. Comparing this passage with 9 : 32-35, we see that the two things for which Job asks here are just the boons that he associates with a daysman. Note, then, the place of this plea. As soon as Job, committing life and destiny to his integrity, feels that he has reached a point where God and he may stand together, and where, believing that God will hear and heed, he may set in order his cause, he makes his plea for that which a daysman would secure. J. F. G.

23. Job begins his plea with the demand to know the number of his sins—how many iniquities and sins have I?—and in general to be made aware of them. He means what great sins he is guilty of, sins that account for his present afflictions. He does not deny sinfulness, even *sins* of his youth (v. 26); what he denies is special sins of such magnitude as to account for his calamities. Job and his friends both agree in the theory that great afflictions are evidence that God holds those whom He afflicts guilty of great offences. The friends believe that Job is guilty of such offences; he knows he is not, and he here demands to know what the sins are of which God holds him guilty. A. B. D.

24. Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face. The loss of property he hardly mentions, his bereavement of his children he barely alludes to; but it is for God he mourns, for the hiding of His face, “the light of His countenance,” that ineffable good for which our purest modern religion finds its best expression in the language of this ancient theism. Such a feeling is not inconsistent with the daring and almost profane expostulations wrung from him by the long continuance of his sharp bodily pains. In every subsidence of this great misery there returns again the humbled, mourning spirit with its Divine want. *T. Lewis.*

Holdest me for Thine enemy. An indirect but most touching assertion of his love and trust; Job feels that the enmity can but be apparent, though every outward act seems to attest its reality. *Cook.*—During the discussion with his friends there is exhibited to us the conflict in Job’s mind; how it sometimes veered in the direction of infidelity, but ever again recovered itself and came back to steadfastness and trust. What raises such tides of

agony in Job’s soul is not that he has been stripped barer than the tree in winter; not that his friends misunderstood him; not even that his life and hopes were extinguished; it is that God has forsaken him; that he is cast out from His presence; and that he is so, all these calamities are proofs too surely conclusive. A. B. D.

26. The iniquities of my youth. An important passage, proving that Job’s consciousness of integrity does not exclude a true estimate of his own character; like the Psalmist, he remembers the sins of his youth, and attributes his sufferings to them, but not without a feeling that it is inconsistent with God’s goodness to visit them so bitterly. The words, however, express a general truth; the sense of sin remains, it haunts the memory, and comes out with terrible vividness in seasons of trial and suffering. *Cook.*—The sins of youth are often the smart of age, both in respect of sorrow within (Jer. 31 : 18, 19) and suffering without (20 : 11). Time does not wear out the guilt of sin. When God writes bitter things against us, His design is to bring forgotten sins to mind, and so to bring us to remorse for them as to break us off from them. This is all the fruit, to take away our sin. H.

There is the language of complaint here; there is a disposition to blame God which we can by no means approve, and which we are not required to approve. But let us not too harshly blame the patriarch. Let him who has suffered much and long—who feels that he is forsaken by God and by man—who has lost property and friends, and who is suffering under a painful bodily malady—if he has never had any of those feelings, cast the first stone. Let not those blame him who live in affluence and prosperity, and who have yet to endure the first severe trial of life. *Barnes.*

CHAPTER XIV.

1 MAN that is born of a woman
Is of few days, and full of trouble.
2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut
down :
He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth
not.
3 And dost thou open thine eyes upon such
an one,
And bringest me into judgment with thee ?

4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an un-
clean ? not one.
5 Seeing his days are determined, the number
of his months is with thee,
And thou hast appointed his bounds that he
cannot pass ;
6 Look away from him, that he may rest,
Till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his
day.

- 7 For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down,
that it will sprout again,
And that the tender branch thereof will not
cease.
- 8 Though the root thereof wax old in the earth,
And the stock thereof die in the ground ;
- 9 Yet through the scent of water it will bud,
And put forth boughs like a plant.
- 10 But man dieth, and wasteth away :
Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where
is he ?
- 11 As the waters fail from the sea,
And the river wasteth and drieth up ;
- 12 So man lieth down and riseth not :
Till the heavens be no more, they shall not
awake,
Nor be roused out of their sleep.
- 13 Oh that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol,
That thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy
wrath be past,
That thou wouldest appoint me a set time,
and remember me !
- 14 If a man die, shall he live *again* ?
All the days of my warfare would I wait,
Till my release should come.
- 15 Thou shouldest call, and I would answer
thee :
Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of
thine hands.
- 16 But now thou numberest my steps :
Dost thou not watch over my sin ?
- 17 My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
And thou fastenest up mine iniquity.
- 18 And surely the mountain falling cometh to
nought,
And the rock is removed out of its place ;
- 19 The waters wear the stones ;
The overflowings thereof wash away the
dust of the earth :
So thou destroyest the hope of man.
- 20 Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he
passeth ;
Thou changest his countenance, and sendest
him away.
- 21 His sons come to honour, and he knoweth
it not ;
And they are brought low, but he perceiv-
eth it not of them.
- 22 But his flesh upon him hath pain,
And his soul within him mourneth.

Verses 1-6: He wonders that God would bring such a being into judgment with *Him*, when the race of man is universally imperfect and a clean one cannot be found in it. And he founds an appeal on the fated shortness of man's life that God would not afflict him with strange and uncommon troubles, but leave him to take what comfort he can, oppressed with only the natural hardships of his short and evil "day." 7-12: This appeal is supported by the remembrance of the inexorable "nevermore" which death writes on man's life. Sadder is the fate of man even than that of the tree. The tree if cut down will bud again, but man dieth and is gone without return as wholly as the water which the sun sucks up from the pool; his sleep of death is eternal. 13-15: Step after step Job has gone down deeper into the waters of despair—the universal sinfulness of mankind and the inexorable severity of God; the troubles of life, of which one must sate himself to the full; its brevity; and last of all, its complete extinction in death. The waters here reach his heart; and human nature, driven back upon itself, becomes prophetic: the vision rises before Job's mind of another life after this one, and he pursues with excited eagerness the glorious phantom. 16-22: Finally, the prayer that such another life might be is supported by a new and dark picture which he draws of his present condition. A. B. D.

1-12. These verses indicate a gradual subsidence of stormy passion, preparatory to a state of mind in which the true secret of God's dispensations may be dimly discerned, a gleam of hope may visit the soul. The images by which the shortness and misery of life and its utter hopelessness, if followed by no resurrection, are illustrated have been adopted in all ages of the Church as the truest and most touching expression of the feelings of mourners. *Cook.*

1. Full of trouble. Suffering is a test of all philosophies and all theories of life. It is useless to leave it out of the calculation; for, through the disorders of a mortal body, through dull discouragements, through weaknesses of the spirit, through a sensitive brain or heart, through the affections that weave families together—through some of these inlets, it forces its way back into every lot, and will not be forgotten. Life does not really become a problem with any of us till we taste of its bitterness. Pain, sorrow, trial, bereavement—these are names of which no man or woman ever learns the real signification from grammar or dictionary, but only by drinking their cup in a secret experience. F. D. H.

2. Man comes forth, says Job, like a *flower*, and is cut down; he is sent into the world the fairest and noblest part of God's works, fashioned after the image of his Creator, with re-

spect to reason and the great faculties of the mind ; he cometh forth glorious as the flower of the field ; as it surpasses the vegetable world in beauty, so does he the animal world in the glory and excellence of his nature. But as God has appointed and determined the several growths and decays of the vegetable race, so He seems as evidently to have prescribed the same laws to man, as well as all living creatures, in the first rudiments of which there are contained the specific powers of their growth, duration and extinction ; and when the evolutions of those animal powers are exhausted and run down, the creature expires and dies of itself, as ripe fruit falls from the tree, or a flower preserved beyond its bloom droops and perishes upon the stalk. *Sterne.*

Life, with its beauty, brevity, and frailty, can find no better symbol than the flower. Life, in its swift evanescence, will never suggest to the greatest poet a more fitting figure than a shadow. V.—Perhaps no image is more suggestive than that which Job here moaned out, that “man fleeth as a shadow.” What is a shadow? Nothing. It is the absence of light. Some obstruction has come between the earth and sun, light has been intercepted, and, as rapidly as light moves, so the shadow withdraws itself. A leaf creates it, a limb, a tree, a fence, a snowflake, a cloud, a flower, a church-spire, a child’s hand. It is very beautiful, like life itself. Nature delights in shadows. They are essential to loveliness and expression, and the master of light and shadow is a great painter. But oh, how swiftly the shadows flee away ! *J. H. Barrows.*—Measure not thyself by thy morning shadow, but by the extent of thy grave, and reckon thyself above the earth by the line thou must be contented with under it. Spread not into boundless expansions either of designs or desires. *Browne.*

4. Job throws his idea of the universal uncleanness of man, and that there is not one without sin, into the form of a wish that it were otherwise. If the race of men were not universally infected with sin, which each individual inherits by belonging to the race, God’s stringent treatment of the individuals would not be so hard to understand. Job urges the admitted fact as a plea for forbearance on the side of God. A. B. D.

Moralists may preach, “Unless above himself he can erect himself, how mean a thing is man !” but all the preaching in the world is of no avail. The task is an impossibility. The stream cannot rise above its source nor be purified in its flow if bitter waters come from

the fountain. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ?” There is no power in human nature to cast off this clinging self. As in the awful vision of the poet, the serpent is grown into the man. The will is feeble for good, the conscience sits like a discrowned king issuing empty mandates, while all his realm is up in rebellion and treats his proclamations as so much waste paper. How can a man remake himself ? how cast off his own nature ? The means at his disposal themselves need to be cleansed, for themselves are tainted. It is the old story—who will keep the keepers ?—who will heal the sick physicians ? Only the influx of that pardoning, cleansing grace which is in Christ will wash away the accumulations of years, and the ingrained evil which has stained every part of my being. We cannot cleanse ourselves, we cannot “put off” this old nature which has struck its roots so deep into our being. Only “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus shall make us free from the law of sin and death.” A. M.

5. The number of our months is with God, at the disposal of His power, which cannot be controlled, and under the view of His omniscience, which cannot be deceived. It is certain that God’s providence has the ordering of the period of our lives, our times are in His hand, the powers of nature depend upon Him and act under Him ; in Him we live and move and have our being. H.

5, 6. The two verses are closely connected ; there should be no full stop at the end of v. 5. Since his days are determined, the number of his months with Thee, since Thou hast fixed his limit which he cannot pass, therefore look away from him that he may cease, till he gladly finish his day, like a hireling. *Cook.*

7-9. One is here at once reminded of the palm which, on the one hand, is pre-eminently a water-loving plant, and, on the other hand, possesses a wonderful vitality, whence it becomes a figure for youthful vigor. The palm and the phoenix have one name, and not without reason. The tree, reviving as from the dead at the scent of water, is like the wondrous bird rising from its own ashes. *Delitzsch.*

10-12. In the case of the tree the possibility of a new life is not excluded, but it is wholly different in the case of a deceased man. As the dried-up water leaves behind it no trace in the lake or stream and never returns, so man, when dead, returneth not until the heaven is no more—and that is eternal—never cometh again from his motionless sleep in Hades into this life in the upper world. *Ewald.*

10. Where is he? In eternity, living, thinking, feeling. In eternity, prepared or unprepared for its life. In eternity, changed or unchanged, saved or unsaved. In eternity, like or unlike God. In eternity, to abide *with* Christ or exiled from Christ. In eternity, to encounter the reaping of that which is now sowing in time, to meet again all the life we have lived, its evil forgiven and its good done a lasting memory of grateful joy, or its evil unforgiven, its good undone, an abiding memory of despairing remorse. B.

Erelong the present state of things shall end. The rich, the noble, the learned, the lowly, the afflicted, the ignorant, shall put aside their temporary *parts*, and be seen in their real, unpersonated, eternal selves! How unspeakably little, in the retrospect, will all these famous inequalities appear! Entering upon immortality—an immortality which knows nothing of any distinctions but those of holiness and nearness to God—with what inconceivable indifference we shall regard the distinctions, the varieties, the apparent advantages and disadvantages of this world! They will be passed, and passed forever!—except in their effects; except as they have left consequences upon our souls, according as they have been improved or neglected, they will be as though they had never been. And what shall remain? our spiritual life; our holy or unholy souls! That which is now so apt to be lost amid petty thoughts and trifling interests; that which is now so often overlaid by all manner of worldly and temporary inequalities, will then stand forth in the greatness of its own true proportions. In our spiritual being—soul and body raised to every seed his own—we shall stand before the Eternal Judge of quick and dead, capable of new and unimagined heights of bliss or depths of woe, to pass at once and forever to our own place. G. M.

How different are the consequences of death to different men! We are now seated within the same walls, all wearing the same form, sharing, for the greater part, in the same joys and sorrows, burdened with the same cares and with the same sins; but look forward a few years, and how amazing the difference that has taken place between man and man! Some of us are in a world of peace, with every sorrow gone, every fear at rest, every hope realized; so pure that a holy God looks on us “with exceeding joy;” so unutterably happy that even in heaven we wonder at our happiness. But where are others of us? In a land where we shall see them no more; as wretched as we are

happy; completely and forever lost. And is a dissimilarity like this, so great, so lasting, and yet so near, a matter of indifference to us? C. Bradley. —Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Where he will remain forever. The disciplinary system has ceased; motives are no longer urged upon him; he hears no arguments. From the cessation of many former influences, from its translation out of that entire economy of trial, and from its new, unmingled emotions, the disembodied spirit must become irresistibly conscious that retribution has commenced. Not one word do we find in holy writ authorizing the belief of a future probation, restoration, or annihilation of the wicked, any more than of future condemnation of the righteous. A. C. Thompson.

There is something that is ours which is to be a thousand years, a million of years, a million of ages hence, a million times that—and so forward; it *is* ours, for it is certain *to be* and certain to be *inseparable from us*. It is to be even ourselves, as absolutely ours as the state we are to be in to-morrow is so—nay, as much as the state we are in this moment belongs to us. J. F.

We long to know something definite as to a future life to which we stand in conscious relationship. Nature is silent. The stars bring us no tidings. Morning brightness, sunset splendor tell us nothing. It is, indeed, “the land which is very far off.” In the hurry of life we may for a while forget, but in our quiet hours, the Sabbaths of the soul, these queries burn into our hearts like coals of fire. “What am I? and what is that realm of spirit to which I am hastening?” None but Christ can tell. He came to teach us. To Christ alone we go to find our ardent yearnings satisfied. Sweetly sounds the Saviour’s voice: “He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” I rejoice with joy unspeakable, for, in touching this promise, I touch the staff of Omnipotence! Baffled everywhere else, repelled everywhere else, I find comfort here. R. S. S.

12. Their sleep. Some translate death into such terrible shapes and represent it to themselves under such affrighting forms that they live in bondage through the fear of death all their days. Do as the Spirit of God teacheth you. Clothe it with pleasant expressions; call it the undressing and unclothing of yourselves; call it rest; conceive it under the notion of sleep, and then you will not fear, but welcome it. Caryl.

13-15. Job expresses a desire that the grave (Sheol) may not be his everlasting home, but that he may remain there till the wrath be past,

that God may appoint a set time and remember him ; he is content to wait for that time if he may then be called to plead his cause ; as he proceeds he finds a real ground for such a hope in God's love of the creation—His desire to the work of His own hands. This may be but a yearning, but it indicates the existence and strength of a feeling which when developed would necessarily issue in the belief of a future compensation. *Cook.*

Having pursued the destiny of man through all its steps down to its complete extinction in death, Job, with a revulsion created by the instinctive demands of the human spirit, rises to the thought that there might be another life after this one. This thought is expressed in the form of an impassioned desire. His firm conviction is that his malady is mortal—in other words, that God's anger will pursue him to the grave. On this side of death he has no hope of a return to God's favor. Hence, contemplating that he shall die under God's anger, his thought is that he might remain in Sheol till God's wrath be past, for He keepeth not His anger forever ; that God would appoint him a period to remain in death and then remember him with returning mercy and call him back again to His fellowship. But to his mind this involves a complete return to life again of the whole man (v. 14), for in death there is no fellowship with God. A. B. D.

13. The word "hide" is very expressive, meaning literally to hide with loving care, as something costly and precious. It carries a beautiful and touching hint that Job still deems himself dear to God. He would fain be hidden by His hand in that shadowy realm which the Egyptians call "the shelter of the weary." V.

14. Shall he live again? The question implies not a denial of the possibility of such a restoration, but a deep sense of its hopelessness. The longing, however, bears witness to a spiritual instinct, which could scarcely exist without some corresponding reality. The latter clause means, were such a hope vouchsafed I would pass all the days of my service in patient waiting until my change came. The days of service in this case include the intermediate period in Sheol, when he would wait, like a soldier on guard, to be relieved ; and the change is not from life to death, but from that state to new life. *Cook.*—If only it might be so, all the days of my sojourn in Hades would I wait until my discharge came. Until that summons from God should call me forth from the darkness I would sit amid the gloom and silence like a sentinel at my post. V.

If a man die, shall he live again?

Consider some of the grounds for believing that the soul of man is immortal. The main current of human opinion sets strongly and steadily toward belief in immortality. The master-minds have been strongest in their affirmation of it. The longing of the soul for life and its horror at the thought of extinction. There must be correlation between desire and fulfillment. The action of the mind in thought begets a sense of continuous life. A parallel argument is found in the nature of love. It cannot tolerate the thought of its own end. Love has but one symbol—Forever ! its logic is, There is no death. There are in man latent powers, and others half revealed, for which human life offers no adequate explanation. There is within us a strange sense of expectancy. A Divine discontent is wrought into us—Divine because it attends our highest faculties. The imagination carries with it a plain intimation of a larger sphere than the present. The same course of thought applies to the moral nature. If we turn to the Divine nature, we shall find a like, but immeasurably clearer group of intimations. Without immortality there is failure in the higher purposes of God respecting the race ; God's ends are indicated, but not reached. The fact that justice is not done upon the earth involves us in the same conclusion. Man is less perfect than the rest of creation, and, relatively to himself, is less perfect in his higher than in his lower faculties. As love is the strongest proof of immortality on the man-ward side of the argument, so it is on the God-ward side. Divine, as well as human love has but one symbol in language—Forever ! *T. T. Munger.*

The confidence of immortality is implied in Job's question. Death does not, in the slightest degree, affect the essential vitality of the soul ; so it does not, in the slightest degree, affect the outflow of God's love to that soul. It is a change of condition and circumstance, and no more. He does not lose us in the dust of death. How beautifully this thought contrasts with the saddest aspect of the power of death in our human experience ! He is Death the Separator, who unclasp our hands from the closest, dearest grasp, and divides asunder joints and marrow, and parts soul and body, and withdraws us from all our habitude and associations and occupations, and loosens every bond of society and concord, and hales us away into a lonely land. But there is one bond which his "abhorred shears" cannot cut. One Hand holds us in a grasp which the fleshless

fingers of death in vain strive to loosen. The separator becomes the uniter; he rends us apart from the world that he may "bring us to God." The love filtered by drops on us in life is poured upon us in a flood in death; "for I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God. A. M.

The Gospel comes to change the whole aspect of death, reigning with terror from the sin of Adam down to the birth of the Redeemer. This celestial visitant, like the shining angel in the tomb of Jesus, takes her stand at the door of the sepulchre, and the light she bears shines far within—yea, entirely through the dark valley. As revealed religion did not produce death nor inflict it, but *finds* it as a fact already existing, so all its extraordinary power is applied, not to *prevent* death, but so to change its whole aspect and quality that the curse shall be converted into a blessing, and men may be more than willing, even glad to die. It is the Gospel which extracts the sting of death, depriving it of all power to harm the feeblest believer. To all intents, death is actually *abolished*. By a Divine revelation we are assured that death is not the destruction of humanity. Life and immortality are brought to light in the Gospel. The body itself shall be raised again, and, perfected and refined itself, shall be conjoined to a refined and perfected spirit. In proof and promise of this great achievement, the Son of God Himself became subject unto death, and rose again from its power. The one sweeping fact of mortality is confronted by another fact, extraordinary and miraculous, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Here is positive help and hope for man, under the most abhorrent event which Nature knows, From being the ghastly King of Terrors, striking down the helpless into the dust, and trampling upon humanity with his iron heel, Death, by the intervention of the Redeemer, is converted into a minister of mercy—unclothing the child of God, that he may be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven. How soft and grateful the light which it sheds on the grave! It is the halo of hope—the reflection of heaven's own peace and repose. W. Adams.

Christ authenticated the popular belief of a life after death, and the future resurrection of the dead. He taught His disciples to anticipate an ultimate, glorious, divine futurity for those who received His doctrine, and who lived an unblemished and holy life upon earth. He spake with great familiarity of heaven as His Father's house, told His friends of its many

mansions, and of His going to prepare a place for them. They heard Him pray that they might be with Him hereafter, to behold His glory and to participate His joy. He evoked the expectation of their rising to an equality with those higher orders of beings who stand continually in the Divine presence, and look familiarly on the face of God. There was nothing dark, vague, or uncertain about His teaching as to the *reality* of a future life; and, as to its *perpetuity*, it was to be "life eternal" in the sense of being that which was to be enjoyed forever; they that were thought worthy to attain it should be like the angels of God, so confirmed in their immortality that they could "die no more." Binney.

President Charles White, of Wabash College, thus wrote during the moments which preceded his own sudden rapt transition to the experience here portrayed:

"What a serene glory surrounds the death-scene, as depicted by the eye of faith! The senses are closing, never to reopen; the eye is dim, never to be relighted—the beautiful, the sublime, the faces of loved ones, never more are recognized; the ear is closed, voices die, sounds are heard no more. But nobler organs are received; visions of spirits ecstatic and rapturous are now enjoyed. Glorious voices are recognized by a new spiritual sense. Uncertainty and darkness and sin are left behind, as also the prison which had held the spirit. Disease and pain and bereavement are an entrance made into the grand lights and substantial purities of an unchanging realm. Faith sees the spirit loosened clear and clean from the world, buoyant and mounting toward heaven—sees the kindled, kindling hope on exultant wing soaring into glory and rest—"

15. Thou wilt have a desire. The hope of a resurrection is thus, for the first time, made to rest upon the love of God; the desire of the creature may suggest the possibility or reasonableness of such a hope, the desire of God alone can seal it. Job knew how his heart yearned to meet God, he believes that in God's heart there must be a corresponding yearning to see once more the creation of His power and love. This word touches upon the utmost limit of religious speculation; with that conviction Job was safe, the next application of it to his own circumstances would bring the truth out in a still more definite form. Cook.—How persistently Job presupposes in God a love like that of a father! And it is on this line of affection—Creator for creature, friend for friend, an affection which in his relations here

on earth has failed—that he reaches his greatest achievements in faith. J. F. G.

Job considered that even in its intermediate state, the body would be precious to God. “Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands.” Of that separate state we know but little. That it will be a state of *consciousness* is evident, both from universal instinct and from the nature of spirit. Spirit can only exist in motion, and therefore the ancients called spirit perpetual motion. It is evident also from the general necessity that a creature once made to glorify God can never cease to glorify Him. In the intermediate state the spirit must be *happy*. How can it be conscious and with Christ, and not happy? So that our Saviour doubly proves it when He says, “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.” Consider that broad foundation thought on which the patriarchs rested for everything, having the resurrection as its base, “Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands.” It is upon this principle that we at once see the unspeakable comfort there is in the full, simple recognition of the doctrines of grace. Once let any part of the work of grace have man in it, and in the same degree it has uncertainty in it. Man does *not* return to his own designs. Man does *not* finish his own work. But God does. If, therefore, the beginnings are entirely God’s, “the ends” are perfectly sure. J. V.

15. This language, which seems to mount to almost full assurance, is but a transient gleam, and the close of the chapter becomes as mournful as its beginning. The inference strongly suggests itself that this is a true experience, an *actual life that is lived*. A soul went through these sorrows. It had these transitions of hope and despair, now moaning and expostulating with God, now praying and trusting, now utterly cast down, and now rising suddenly to a height of rapture in which everything disappears before the beatific vision of God. To a mind in a right state there comes from this an irresistible argument for the actual truthfulness of the history. T. Lewis.

16. The head and source of all Job’s misery is the feeling that God for some unknown reason does not pardon. He numbers every false step, keeps a watch over his sins. Cook. —It is but a moment ago (v. 15) that he recognized, in a strain of inimitable beauty, the yearning bent of creative Love. He is now, indeed, complaining of the present severity of God’s dealings with him; but the plaintive tenderness of that sentiment still floats over his spirit and lingers in his words, softening them

into the tone of a subdued and reproachful moan. Ewald.

17. My transgression. The meaning seems to be that God treasures up all Job’s misdoings, keeps them carefully in order to repay them fully. He has but to open that bag and the sins will come out in the form of terrible plagues. Here again the admission of sin must be noted. Cook. —God does indeed see all our sins, He sees sin in His own people, but He is not severe in reckoning with us, nor is the law ever stretched against us, but we are punished less than our iniquities deserve. God does indeed seal and sew up, against the day of wrath, the transgression of the impenitent, but the sins of His people He blots out as a cloud. H.

18, 19. The agencies affecting the whole surface of the earth and giving character to its scenery, while explaining its history, are vividly set forth by Job, when he says, “And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought (or fadeth), and the rock is removed out of his place. The waters wear the stones; Thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth.” The very processes which modern geologists are engaged in keenly discussing are specified in the language of the patriarch. Comprehensively, these delineations in Scripture may possibly represent universal geologic movements. W. Fraser.

As “the waters wear the stones,” they teach us a *lesson of perseverance*. They write upon the rocks a parable of patient diligence. There are some things which must be done at a stroke, on the spur of the moment, or the opportunity is gone forever. But the eye to see what is to be done, the skill to aim the stroke, the strength to give it, the coolness and courage to be as steady and self-possessed at the moment as if you had plenty of time to spare—these can come only by slow, patient, persevering work, like that with which “the waters wear the stones.” The waters as they wear the stones may teach us a *parable of life*. They may remind us what little things may in time do great mischief. Not a few homes could be found in which it would pay to have this motto put up in golden letters, if only everybody would learn its lessons. They seem to lack nothing that is needed for a happy home. What is amiss? Only this, that no one has learned how much both the happiness and the unhappiness of life depend on little things. Little opportunities for a kind action, a kind word, a kind look, slip by continually. And so, because life is mostly made up of little things, the happiness of home

is bit by bit destroyed, even as "the waters wear the stones." The water-worn rock teaches us another parable—a parable of *character*. Our character depends chiefly on the habits we form. There are good habits and bad habits. And how do these habits grow? Little by little, as "the waters wear the stones." The Bible speaks of a "stony heart"—that is, a heart hardened in sinful habits, in unbelief and forgetfulness of God. We cannot change the past, but God can forgive it. Tears of repentance cannot wash away one sin, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. *E. R. Conder.*

All these similitudes appear to aim at the same point, which Job had been pursuing a little before—namely, that a man dying shall return no more to his former state; this he shadows out by mountains, rocks, stones, trees, and the fruits of the earth, which are changed and consumed, as if they had never been. *Caryl.*

19. Thou destroyest the hope of man. Even the most durable things cannot defy decay; and as to mortal man, thou hast brought his hope utterly to nought. Death, the germ of which he carries in him even from his birth, is to him an end without a ray of hope. *Delitzsch.*—The mind of Job, beginning to fall back into its despondency, is led to a mental consideration of the slow changes of nature, and breaks out into a sort of abrupt answer to the thought that had silently intervened: "Ah yes! God's times are long; the earth, too, and the heavens (vs. 11, 12) are passing away." "Yes; even the mountain, falling, crumbles to decay." The effect of this is to throw a shade over his hope, until, at the end of the chapter, he seems to have got almost wholly to his old despairing state. *T. Lewis.*

With this language of mingled complaint, remonstrance, despondency, and doubt, Job closes the first series of the controversy. He is evidently in deep perplexity. He knows not what to do or what to think; but, on the whole,

his language is that of one who feels that God and man are alike against him, and that he has no comforter. *Kitto.*

The first circle of speeches, now completed, started from Job's complaints in chap. 3. Job did not there name God nor make any open imputation against Him, but his bitter maledictions of the day of his birth and his impatient cry, Why gives He life to him that is in misery (3 : 20)? showed too well against whom it was that he "turned his spirit" (15 : 12). Hence the three friends conceive that the first thing to aim at is to bring Job back to just and reverent thoughts of God. Therefore they dwell upon the attributes of God and contrast Him with man, hoping by this great thought of God to still the tumult in Job's breast and bring him to take his right place before the Creator. However irreligious Job's demeanor might seem to his friends, it is obvious that he has struck from their hands the weapon they have hitherto been using against him. Their argument of "God" is exhausted. Job's passionate proclamation that what he desires above all things is to meet God and maintain his ways to His face has convinced them that he is not to be vanquished with this weapon. Hence they are obliged to look about for others. *A. B. D.*

What has Job gained in this first discussion? 1. He has won a victory in argument over the friends. Against their insinuations of his guilt, his conscience, acquitting him of hidden guilt, and speaking out in manly denial, has proved more effective than all logic. To their rebukes of his impatience he has a ready answer in the desperation to which suffering has driven him. To the dogma that God rewards the good and punishes the wicked in this life he has opposed the unanswerable argument of fact. 2. He has refuted the great accuser, Satan. He has *not* renounced God. Everything has been taken from him; all sorts of calamities have been heaped upon him. God, who had been the object of his love, the source of his happiness, had apparently renounced him, yet he never renounces God. *V.*

CHAPTER XV.

1 THEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,

2 Should a wise man make answer with vain knowledge,

And fill his belly with the east wind?

3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk,
Or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?

- 4 Yea, thou doest away with fear,
And restrainest devotion before God.
- 5 For thine iniquity teacheth thy mouth,
And thou choosest the tongue of the crafty.
- 6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and
not I ;
Yea, thine own lips testify against thee.
- 7 Art thou the first man that was born ?
Or wast thou brought forth before the hills ?
- 8 Hast thou heard the secret counsel of God ?
And dost thou limit wisdom to thyself ?
- 9 What knowest thou, that we know not ?
What understandest thou, which is not in us ?
- 10 With us are both the grayheaded and the
very aged men,
Much elder than thy father.
- 11 Are the consolations of God too small for
thee,
Even the word that is gentle toward thee ?
- 12 Why doth thine heart carry thee away ?
And why do thine eyes flash ?
- 13 That thou turnest thy spirit against God,
And lettest *such* words go out of thy mouth.
- 14 What is man, that he should be clean ?
And he which is born of a woman, that he
should be righteous ?
- 15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his holy ones ;
Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight
- 16 How much less one that is abominable and
corrupt,
A man that drinketh iniquity like water !
- 17 I will shew thee, hear thou me :
And that which I have seen I will declare :
- 18 (Which wise men have told
From their fathers, and have not hid it ;
- 19 Unto whom alone the land was given,
And no stranger passed among them :)
- 20 The wicked man travaileth with pain all his
days,
Even the number of years that are laid up
for the oppressor.
- 21 A sound of terrors is in his ears ;
In prosperity the spoiler shall come upon
him :
- 22 He believeth not that he shall return out of
darkness,
And he is waited for of the sword :
- 23 He wandereth abroad for bread, *saying*,
Where is it ?
He knoweth that the day of darkness is ready
at his hand :
- 24 Distress and anguish make him afraid ;
They prevail against him, as a king ready to
the battle :
- 25 Because he hath stretched out his hand
against God,
And behaveth himself proudly against the
Almighty ;
- 26 He runneth upon him with a *stiff* neck,
With the thick bosses of his bucklers :
- 27 Because he hath covered his face with his
fatness,
And gathered fat upon his loins ;
- 28 And he hath dwelt in desolate cities,
In houses which no man inhabited,
Which were ready to become heaps.
- 29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his sub-
stance continue,
Neither shall their possessions be extended
on the earth.
- 30 He shall not depart out of darkness ;
The flame shall dry up his branches,
And by the breath of his mouth shall he go
away.
- 31 Let him not trust in vanity, deceiving him-
self :
For vanity shall be his recompense.
- 32 It shall be accomplished before his time,
And his branch shall not be green.
- 33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the
vine,
And shall cast off his flower as the olive.
- 34 For the company of the godless shall be bar-
ren,
And fire shall consume the tents of bribery.
- 35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth in-
iquity,
And their belly prepareth deceit.

CHAPS. XV.-XXI. THE SECOND CIRCLE OF
SPEECHES.

THE three friends have now spoken, and Job has replied to them all in turn. The first series of the discussion closed with the last chapter, and the second commences with the one before us. In this the friends add scarcely anything to what they had already urged, betraying manifest signs of exhaustion. The speeches are of equal number as before, but so much shorter that this section of the debate occupies only seven chapters, as against eleven in the first de-

bate. *Kitto*.—The arguments employed by the three friends remain throughout in substance the same. But up to this time the three have been content with general statements, which were, of course, partially true ; now they step forward to a direct and personal attack. Job's speeches appear to them to be a damning proof of his impiety, and they do not hesitate to denounce him as a rebel against God. In attempting to maintain their new position, the three friends stray further and further from the truth, and, as is natural, grow visibly angry.

Wounded self-love shows behind their zeal for God, and, as always happens, their bigotry grows more intense with the rise of personal feeling. Job, on the other hand, becomes every moment calmer and more collected as the accusations assume a more direct form. Before, he had been confused and divided, as one who fights in the dark where friend and foe are indistinguishable. But as the charges are brought personally home to him he feels more and more the falsehood implied in them, and is more and more confirmed in his innocence. "He had before known that he was innocent, and now he feels the strength that lies in innocence, as if God were beginning to reveal Himself within him, to prepare the way for the outward manifestation of Himself." The theme chosen by the speakers suits their indignant mood. Abandoning all attempt to comfort Job with the promises that wait on repentance, they concentrate all their powers on the description of the doom of wicked men. It is an awful picture, none the less true because of the falsehood of its application. The type of wickedness selected is one intended to cover the case of Job. It is the Oriental chieftain grown great and rich by successful violence and rapine (15 : 27, 28 ; 18 : 7 ; 20 : 6-15). The successive steps of the tyrant's ruin are graphically described, from the first stings of the guilty conscience that disturbs the serenity of his proud prosperity to the oblivion that at last overwhelms and buries his infamous name (15 : 20 sq. ; 18 : 7 sq. ; 20). A few delicate touches serve to detect the individual peculiarities of the three. Eliphaz is still the most dignified and considerate, and although he assumes an air of superiority, he tries to make his words less direct while he supports them with the weighty authority of tradition. He dwells chiefly on the terrors which haunt a guilty mind, painting, with a vividness of touch which no poetry has surpassed, the coward fears that attend an evil conscience. Bildad, whose taste for brevity makes Job's lengthy speeches especially offensive to him (18 : 2), follows with a description of the godless man, which is a masterpiece of poetic idealizing, and teems with images that have enriched literature forever (vs. 6-14). Zophar, the most angry and the least able to disguise his wounded vanity, pursues the same theme in a series of vigorous figures, which display at the same time the narrowness of his mind. *Aglen.*

Job's demeanor under his sufferings only confirmed the conclusions which his sufferings themselves compelled them to draw. They see

in Job a type both of the calamities that befall the wicked and of their rebellious impatience under them. In this way the thoughts of the friends are drawn away from heaven to earth. God is no more their theme, but man, especially *the wicked man as history and experience show him to be dealt with in the providence of God.* The effect of this change is naturally to draw the arguments of the friends closer around Job, and bring the debate to a crisis. For though the object of the three friends in drawing their dark pictures of the heaven-daring sinner and his fate is to awaken Job's conscience and alarm him, that he may turn from his evil, their arguments are now of a kind that can be brought to the test of experience, and Job, so soon as he can be induced to grapple with them, has little difficulty in disposing of them. A. B. D.

Chap. 15. It has now become the turn of Eliphaz, who opened the former debate, to speak again. He begins with bitter sarcasms and reproaches, and strongly censures Job's doctrine of the indiscriminate distribution of happiness and misery, as tending to undermine religion, and to discourage prayer. The drift of the whole speech is to vindicate Providence, to condemn Job as a manifest object of the Divine wrath on account of his wickedness, and to terrify him, if possible, into a confession of his guilt. *Kitto.*—The speech of Eliphaz is harsh and sarcastic, and assumes Job's guilt as proven by his own lips. 1-6 : He reproves his presumption in despising the wisdom of his elders, disregarding the consolations of God and arraigning His judgments, forgetful of man's utter corruption and his own abomination. 7-16 : Then, under cover of quoting axioms of wise antiquity, he describes the actual condition, feelings, and struggles of Job, in which he sees a proof of his wickedness, and a token of his final destruction. The discourse has not a word of comfort, nor the suggestion of a hope. It marks a considerable change in the spirit of the speaker, and brings the question much nearer to an issue. He does not indeed accuse Job of *renouncing* God, but of rebelling against Him (vs. 4, 13, 25, 26), and denounces his attempts to vindicate himself, and hold fast his integrity, as vain, impious and hypocritical.

2. Vain knowledge. Literally, "knowledge of wind," empty, noisy, and turbulent ; the turn of expression is highly sarcastic, it has what may be called a grim humor ; the words of Job are like wind, his whole inner man is inflated, torn, and in a state of turmoil, as though possessed by storm winds from the burning

desert. The word "belly" is a necessary because literal translation of the original, which means in Hebrew physiology the innermost nature of man, the seat of thought, intelligence, and reflection. *Cook.*

A wise man with vain knowledge.

There is oftentimes a great deal of knowledge where there is but little wisdom to improve that knowledge. It is not the most knowing Christian but the most wise Christian that sees, avoids, and escapes Satan's snarcs. Knowledge without wisdom is like mettle in a blind horse, which is often an occasion of the rider's fall. *T. Brooks.*—Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for what they know. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom. *Anon.*

4. He charges him with impiety and irreligion. "*Thou castest off fear*"—that is, "the fear of God, and that regard to Him which thou shouldest have; and then thou restrainest prayer." See what religion is summed up in—fearing God and praying to Him; the former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is no good is to be expected; and those who live without prayer certainly live without God in the world. Those who restrain prayer prove that they cast off fear. Surely those have no reverence of God's majesty, no dread of His wrath, and are in no care about their souls and eternity, who make no applications to God for His grace. Those who are prayerless are fearless and graceless. *H.*

This text helps us to put our finger on the cause of a great deal that is amiss in all of us. It is very likely, it is all but certain, that the reason of all our trouble and discouragement, and want of growth and health is that we are doing just the thing that Job's unkind friend accused him of in the text—"restraining prayer before God." *A. K. H. B.*—In proportion to their importance, who gives as much time to prayer as to business; as much thought to their Bibles as merchants to their ledgers; as much trouble to cultivate their souls as husbandmen expend in ploughing and sowing and weeding the soil, and reaping the crop? No wonder that even those who are saved make such slow progress in the Divine life. *T. G.*

Hundreds of millions are paying homage to insensible substances, phantasms, or devils. Many millions are literally making to themselves an amusement and a sport of shows and vain ceremonies of a religion pretended to be in

homage to the true God. But come to what is accounted the most privileged, instructed, and Christianized portion of mankind. There are millions of them that practise no worship, no prayer at all in any manner; they are entirely "without God in the world." Assemble them in imagination, and look upon them! To say to but one of these, in the full and entire sense, "Thou restrainest prayer!" is pronouncing upon him an awful charge, is predicting an awful doom. You are pronouncing that he habitually scorns the Almighty, his soul, and the happiness of eternity; that he deliberately keeps himself detached from all that could save him from perdition! *J. F.*—Drexellius tells us of a vision that a religious man had at his prayers in the congregation. He saw a several angel at the elbow of every one present, ready to write down his petitions; those who prayed heartily their angels wrote down their suits in gold; those that prayed but coldly and carelessly their angels wrote, too, but it was with water; those that prayed customarily, only from the teeth outward, had their angels by them, who seemed to write, but it was with a dry pen, no ink in it. Such as slept had their angels by them, but they laid their pens by. Such as had worldly thoughts their angels wrote in the dust. And such as had envious and malicious spirits their angels wrote with gall. If this be so, I fear few angels have written this day in golden letters; but the pens of the others have gone very fast. Have a care how thou prayest, if thou wouldest have them written with the golden pen. *N. Rogers.*

Neglect of reading the Bible is a powerful hindrance to our prayers. In these pages we commune with God. In these chapters we find the promises. Here stand the invitations to God's presence. Reading here we are better prepared to pray. Reading here makes us feel like praying. Here is revealed God's will, according to which our requests are to be shaped. Here are the Saviour's directions for the duty. And if we shut up all this from eye and thought, we cut off the living springs that give life and elasticity to prayer. The man cannot be found who rejects his Bible and is faithful in his closet. If he think he can pray as well without the inconvenient delay of first bringing into contact with his mind the thoughts of God as recorded here, he is preparing to stifle and restrain prayer. And this is the way in which prayer often declines with individuals and with a whole church. *R. S. S.*—How many prayers this deception has precluded: "I shall be in a better tone of feeling; my thoughts

more composed ; there will be less liability to interruption ; such an affair I shall have disposed of and discharged from my mind. It were even irreverent to approach the Divine majesty just as I now feel ''! As if that commanded serious effort required in such approach were not one of the best expedients for putting the mind in order. And then, what does experience say as to the actual occurrence and improvement of that expected better season ? How soon does the seasonable hour come, when the first is easily let to slide by as unseasonable ? Is there a disposition to give a ready allowance to pleas for deferring or cutting very short ? What a test of the habitude of the heart is there in this ! J. F.

We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. Whose fault is it that Christian people generally have such scanty portions of the free riches of God ? Prayers unaccompanied by effort are not answered. Many ask who do not seek. There must be continuous desire and effort. That implies that the answers do not always come immediately. The best gifts grow slowly, more than forty and six years is the temple of a Christ-like nature in building. Therefore patient continuance in waiting on the Giver is the final condition of receiving His highest gifts. A. M.

5. *Thine iniquity.* Eliphaz can attribute Job's bold words only to high-handed defiance of God ; there is no room in his system for honest doubt and inquiry. Even Job's assumption of honesty, as would seem from the next line, looks to him like craft.

7. Job's ideas so strike out from the beaten path that he talks like one with a new source of knowledge. His assertion that he knows all that they have told him, and his contempt of their philosophy, is galling to Eliphaz.

11. *Consolations of God*—such is the name that Eliphaz gives to his admonitions, a name that evidently rankles in Job's mind. J. F. G. —The force of self-complacency can hardly go further than in this assumption of being God's agent of consolation to Job. V.

14-16. Eliphaz repeats here what he has already said (4 : 18 seq.), but he does it intentionally, since he wishes still more terribly to ascribe human uncleanness to Job. He first refers to the hereditary infirmity and sin in human nature (v. 14), and next (v. 16) to man's own free choice of that which works his destruction. He uses the strongest imaginable words to describe one *actually* and *originally* corrupted. It

is further said of him (man) that he drinks up evil like water—a figure which implies that he lusts after sin, and that it is become a necessity of his nature, and is to his nature what water is to the thirsty. Even Job does not deny this corruption of man (14 : 4), but the inferences which the friends draw in reference to himself he cannot acknowledge. *Delitzsch*.—Does it follow that Job is a hypocrite and a wicked man, which is all that he denied ? By no means. Though man, as born of a woman, is not clean, yet, as born again of the Spirit, he is. H.

20-35. Here begin the words of the fathers. Eliphaz brings up this lurid picture of the wicked in order to counteract Job's intimations that the wicked are prospered while the righteous suffer. Such intimations, in direct contradiction to the conclusions of wisdom, seem to open the door to all kinds of violence and infidelity ; it lets down the barriers of doubt and admits indefinable riotings of extravagant doctrine. So Eliphaz, who gives the tone to the others, desires to put himself strongly on record for God ; hence this purely theoretical picture of the wicked, drawn not for truth, but for theological consistency, and erring grossly by exaggeration ; see, for instance, v. 29, which Job will show to be palpably untrue. J. F. G.

25, 26. The wicked man (v. 20) bids defiance to God, and to His authority and power. Tell him of the Divine law and its obligations ; he breaks those bonds asunder and will not have, no, not Him that made him, to restrain him or rule over him. Tell him of the Divine wrath and its terrors ; he bids the Almighty do His worst, he will have his will, he will have his way in spite of Him, and will not be controlled by law, or conscience, or the notices of a judgment to come. He stretches out his hand against God in defiance of Him and of the power of His wrath. God is indeed out of His reach, but he stretches out his hand against Him, to show that if it were in his power he would ungod Him. Sinners in general run *from* God ; but the presumptuous sinner, who sins with a high hand, runs *upon* Him, fights against Him, and bids defiance to Him ; and it is easy to foretell what will be the issue.

27. *He covers his face with his fatness.* This signifies both the pampering of his flesh with daily delicious fare, and the hardening of his heart thereby against the judgments of God. The gratifying of the appetites of the body, feeding and feasting that to the full, often turns to the damage of the soul and its interests. Why is God forgotten and slighted, but be-

cause happiness is placed in the delights of sense? H.

28. Ready to become heaps. This is an emphatic description of the condition of many sites of ancient renown which we have examined in the East, and which are literally heaps—nothing but heaps—covered with soil, and appearing like natural hillocks, but which are known to cover blocks of ancient building. The houses mentioned here are “houses of clay,” or of sun-dried brick, and such are the houses which are especially liable to become heaps. The recent descriptions of such mounds or heaps at Nineveh, by Layard and others, and the discoveries which their exploration has afforded, have rendered this condition of ancient cities—so different from that of *stony* ruins in various lands—familiar to the minds of our readers. It is to such kinds of “heaps” that we apprehend Eliphaz to refer to as the ultimate condition of “desolate cities.” We shall not readily forget the surprise, nearly akin to disappointment, with which we regarded the first ancient site of this sort that came under our personal notice—when, instead of broken walls, and towers, and columns of stone, nothing appeared but a confused wilderness of rounded “heaps”—a sea of solid billows. This happened to be Seleucia, on the Tigris, sometimes called Babylon. *Kitto*.

29. Many that get much by fraud and injustice, yet do not grow rich; it goes as it comes; it is got by one sin, and spent upon an-

other. He is in care to keep what he has got, but in vain, *his substance shall not continue*; it will dwindle and come to nothing, God blasts it, and what *came up in a night perishes in a night*. *Wealth gotten by vanity will certainly be diminished*. H.

33. The grape in its first stage is peculiarly tender and liable to disease, and the flowers of the olive are shaken off by the least gust of wind.

34. Two charges are insinuated: hypocrisy, with reference to Job's former reputation for piety, and bribery, with reference to his character as a judge; both words imply secret and unsuspected guilt, discovered only by the punishment. Thus Eliphaz answers Job's protestations of innocence. *Cook*.

35. Finally Eliphaz condenses into an expressive figure the general doctrine both of this and his former discourse—namely, that suffering and disaster follow, as by a law of nature, doing evil and wrong. A. B. D.—However wide of the mark these words may be as applied to Job, we cannot be blind to the power and truthfulness of this description of the terrors which sometimes beset the wicked. While many a wicked man goes through life in prosperity and apparently without fear, yet in the experience of one and another the retributions of the future are foreshadowed in this world. And no more terrible and graphic picture of a sinner thus pursued and foredoomed can be found than in these old Arabian sayings of Eliphaz. *Vincent*.

CHAPTER XVI.

1 THEN Job answered, and said,
2 I have heard many such things :
Miserable comforters are ye all.
3 Shall vain words have an end ?
Or what provoketh thee that thou answerest ?
4 I also could speak as ye do ;
If your soul were in my soul's stead,
I could join words together against you,
And shake mine head at you.
5 But I would strengthen you with my mouth,
And the solace of my lips should assuage
your grief.
6 Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged :
And though I forbear, what am I eased ?
7 But now he hath me weary :
Thou hast made desolate all my company.

8 And thou hast laid fast hold on me, *which is*
a witness *against me* :
And my leanness riseth up against me, it
testifieth to my face.
9 He hath torn me in his wrath, and perse-
cuted me ;
He hath gnashed upon me with his teeth :
Mine adversary sharpeneth his eyes upon
me.
10 They have gaped upon me with their mouth ;
They have smitten me upon the cheek re-
proachfully :
They gather themselves together against me.
11 God delivereth me to the ungodly,
And casteth me into the hands of the wicked.
12 I was at ease, and he brake me asunder ;

Yea, he hath taken me by the neck, and dashed me to pieces :
 He hath also set me up for his mark.
 13 His archers compass me round about,
 He cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare ;
 He poureth out my gall upon the ground.
 14 He breaketh me with breach upon breach ;
 He runneth upon me like a giant.
 15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin,
 And have laid my horn in the dust.
 16 My face is foul with weeping,
 And on my eyelids is the shadow of death ;

CHAPS. XVI., XVII. JOB'S SECOND REPLY TO ELIPHAZ.

JOB'S second answer occupies two chapters. 1-5 : He rejects the statements of Eliphaz as commonplace, such as he might have himself used with equal ease had the positions of the speakers been reversed. 6-16 : He draws out all the circumstances of his misery in order to justify the extremity of his anguish, and after an asseveration of innocence (v. 17) he appeals to earth and heaven, and to God Himself (v. 20). In 17 : 1-10 he continues the appeal, and grounds it on the scorn, contumely (v. 2), ignorance (v. 4), and dishonesty (v. 5) of his friends. He then (vs. 11-16) concludes with an expression of utter hopelessness, so far as life is concerned ; if there be hope it has no visible grounds, it has its only home in death. *Cook.*

Chap. 16. God's turning away from Job causes men to avert their faces too. His isolation is complete. And to him who had once stood so high in the estimation of men, and as a man of deep human feelings yearned for men's sympathy, the thought comes home with a crushing effect. This is the new thought in Job's mind, and it is this thought that gives such a tragic pathos to his speeches in the second cycle of debate. In the first circle of speeches it is God's enmity alone of which Job complains, but now there is added to this the universal alienation and abhorrence of mankind. This feeling gives tone to all his speeches, and in chap. 19, which forms the climax of this division, finds its fullest expression in the words, Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends, why do ye persecute me like God ? And this overmastering feeling forces its way to expression almost in spite of him (v. 6) in the first part of the present speech (vs. 7-17). Nothing now remains to him but his own sense of his innocence ; and to this he clings all the more tenaciously. He shall never be acknowledged in this life ; he shall die under God's hand and go down to the

17 Although there is no violence in mine hands,
 And my prayer is pure.
 18 O earth, cover not thou my blood,
 And let my cry have no *resting* place.
 19 Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
 And he that voucheth for me is on high.
 20 My friends scorn me :
 But mine eye poureth out tears unto God ;
 21 That he would plead for a man with God,
 And as a son of man for his neighbour !
 22 For when a few years are come,
 I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

grave numbered with the transgressors, for the hopes which the friends held out of restoration were but the veriest folly. But it is a martyr's death that he shall die. And so strong is his sense of his innocence that he rises to the assurance that it cannot remain unrecognized forever. His innocent blood will appeal unto heaven with an unceasing cry till it finds a response (v. 18). And even now he has a Witness who will testify for him, even God as He is in Himself in heaven. And to this Witness he makes his appeal. Men mock him, but he lifts his tearful face (v. 20) to God, God as He is in truth and as He must reveal himself in the future, begging that He would uphold his right with God, who now is unjustly bringing him to death, and do justice between him and his fellows, whose suspicions so cruelly wrong him (v. 21). And if he may not ask or expect that God would appear for him in this life, yet he will beseech God to give him some pledge even here that afterward, when he shall have gone the way whence he shall not return, He will make his innocence to appear (v. 22). A. B. D.

2. Many such things. Such wise saws as identify guilt with suffering. "Miserable comforters," or "comforters of trouble," who bring nothing but trouble. The same word is used here which in the last verse of the preceding chapter is rendered "mischief." Job thus retorts, the conception of mischief or trouble applies more directly to those whose duty it was to console the afflicted. *Cook.*—Eliphaz has just blamed Job (chap. 15) for despising the "consolations of God." Job retorts that the friends are administering just the reverse of consolation ; they are tormenting comforters. J. F. G.

4. In my soul's stead. In the same state, like mine, wretched and desolate. *Heap up words* ; the original phrase implies artificial combinations of words, as though it were all mere rhetorical declamation. *Cook.*

6-17. Leaving here what Eliphaz has said, Job returns to his own line of thinking, which he laid down at the end of chap. 14 with the unsolved problem of death. It is the thought of his suffering that he now takes up, and especially with reference to the author of it. J. F. G.

He hardly knows whether he shall speak or be silent, so overcome is he and so unavailing to help him or make men judge truly of him are both speech and silence—*if I speak my grief is not assuaged, and if I forbear what am I eased?* (v. 6). Yet this new condition in which he realizes that he is, which makes speech useless, forces him to speak, and he sets before himself in an excited soliloquy the combined enmity to him of men and God. First (vs. 7-11), he realizes to himself the complete estrangement from him of all familiar friends; God's enmity to him has turned men also into foes (vs. 7, 8). This combined enmity of God and men is represented under what seems the figure of a creature hunted by one great, lion-like assailant, leading on a host of minor, ignobler foes. The chief adversary is first described, his rending anger, and gnashing teeth, and flashing eyes (v. 9); and then the pell-mell rout of baser foes that howled behind him, their open mouth and shameless gestures, and full cry after the prey, which is flung over into their hands (vs. 10, 11). Second (vs. 12-17), the hostility of God Himself is particularly dwelt upon in graphic figures, which express its unexpected suddenness, its violence and destructiveness. One figure is that of a man suddenly grasped by another of overwhelming strength and tossed about and dashed to pieces (v. 12). Then the figure changes, and this shattered frame is set up as a mark, and God's arrows hiss around him and split his reins and pour out his life to the ground (v. 13). Again the figure changes, and this body seems some fair edifice or fort which God dismantles by breach upon breach till it lies a sorrowful ruin (v. 14). And finally is described the condition of humiliation to which the sufferer is brought, and all this befell him, though he had done no wrong (vs. 15-17). A. B. D.

7. The notable thing of this whole passage is that Job hardly knows how to identify the author of his misery. He speaks here of "He," without naming God; in the next breath he turns directly to God and says, "Thou;" again it is "His anger" (v. 9), as if Job were reluctant to tax God directly with it; then it is "mine enemy," as if it were some fell power whom he dared not name. Anon it is "they" (v. 10), as if it were an army of foes, or as if his friends were combined with the unseen powers.

Clearly Job is hesitating to ascribe to God such hatred as he must recognize in his punishment; he is groping after the God of love, and unwittingly drawing near to Him. J. F. G.

7-9. No solacing word shall come to him. He means to say that he stands entirely alone, and neither sees nor hears anything consolatory. He is therefore completely shut up to himself; and this suffering form to which God has reduced him is become an evidence, an accusation, which puts him down as a sinner, although his self-consciousness testifies the opposite to him. It was the wrath of God which tore him so and pursued him hostilely. God has gnashed against him with His teeth, and sharpened His eyes, like swords, to pierce him through. His present suffering is only the continuation of the decree of wrath which is gone forth concerning him. *Delitzsch.*—It is Job's deep-rooted conviction of the *goodness* of God which embitters him and stimulates accusation; for why, being so good a being, should He treat him thus? Under the complaints of Job there is perceptible the feeling of the peculiar hardship of suffering under a good Being whom he was bound to honor and reverence. He shows the inconsistency of perplexed love, keenly alive to the goodness of its object, and quickly susceptible on that very account of anger toward it. *Mozley.*

11. The contumely to which Job is exposed is attributed to God's will; the heaviest affliction of all was, that he should be delivered up to men whose want of honesty, truthfulness, and love evinced their wickedness. *Cook.*

12-14. The imagery shows the sufferer, first, as one assailed from without, seized by the neck, and again made a mark to be shot at; next, we see his very vitals torn within him; and last, he is likened to a fortress broken by successive assaults of an irresistible antagonist. In all this God Himself is the efficient cause and agent. *Curry.*

15. Laid my horn in the dust. Generally the horn appears in the Bible as a symbol of strength and power. The figure is undoubtedly taken from horned animals, whose power in attack or defence rests in their horns; and hence the word came to be used to denote the qualities which confer greatness on man—his honor, dignity, and strength. At length the horn itself, commuted eventually for a representation of it, came to be worn as a sign of power; and as such it appears in the most ancient figures of gods and spiritual existences, and was also worn by princes and leaders of men. Of this there is *now* no question, for the representation of two, and often four horns, two

on each side, enfold the turbans or crowns of the most exalted beings represented in the sculptures of Nineveh. *Kitto*.—To exalt the horn—an expression often occurring in the poetic and prophetic parts of the Bible—means to advance in power, honor, and dominion. To defile it in the dust is a figure drawn from the condition of a dying ox or stag, who literally defiles his horn in dust mingled with his own blood. It is painfully significant of defeat, disgrace, and death, and for a prince like Job it was to be dishonored and utterly overthrown. *W. M. Thomson*.

17. Job's condition was very deplorable; but had he nothing to support him, nothing to comfort him? Yes; he had the testimony of his conscience that he had walked uprightly, and had never allowed himself in any gross sin. None was ever more ready than he to acknowledge his sins of infirmity; but he could not charge himself with any enormous crime, for which he should be made more miserable than other men. "*Not for any injustice in my hands, any wealth that I have unjustly got or kept.*" Eliphaz had represented him as a tyrant and an oppressor. "No," says he, "I never did any wrong to any man, but always despised the gain of oppression." Eliphaz had charged him with hypocrisy in religion, but he specifies prayer, the great act of religion, and professes that in that he was pure, though not from all infirmity, yet from reigning and allowed guile. *H*.

Not for any injustice. In the original exactly the same words are used which are applied to Christ by Isaiah (53 : 9) : "Because he had done no violence," or, "not that he had done any violence." In this passage the meaning is given more accurately. Job directly meets the two charges of injustice toward man and hypocrisy toward God.

18. Cover not Thou my blood. In this sublime outcry Job alludes to the old belief that the blood of one unjustly slain remains on the earth. The earth cannot absorb it, it cries aloud for vengeance. (See Isa. 26 : 21; Ezek. 24 : 7, 8, and Gen 4 : 10) It is the strongest assertion of his innocence; he dies guiltless; his blood, like that of Abel, cries to God; that cry can have "no place," no rest until it is answered. Thus while in form appealing to earth, Job in fact appeals to God Himself. *Cook*.

"I must die, but it is unrighteous murder. Let the earth refuse to drink in my blood thus unjustly shed, so that it may remain forever exposed, a constant witness to the terrible wrong perpetrated upon me; and let my death-cry

never be hushed to silence, but resound forever in testimony of the cruel violence under which I suffer. I die, unable longer to sustain these dreadful inflictions which God is bringing upon me; but I die protesting against the injustice and the outrage." Has Satan, then, gained his end, and has Job at length fallen into the snare? In the frightful darkness which has, to outward view, obscured the evidence of God's rectitude, has Job given up his sense of that rectitude? Is his confidence in God's eternal justice gone? Then has he indeed been driven to that renunciation of God's service to which Satan has been relentlessly endeavoring to force him. No! In all this agony and darkness and inexplicable mystery Job cannot let go his ineradicable trust in God. Brought, as it might seem, almost to the point of abandoning it, the strength of that trust only becomes more conspicuous from the strain to which it has been subjected. By its powerful recoil it carries him suddenly back from the verge of the abyss to the immovable foundation. The faith that seemed to be vanishing, if it had not already vanished, rises unexpectedly superior over all the tumult of his soul, and all depressing circumstances. From his frantic outcry against the injustice that is slaying him he passes to the instant expression of his unabated trust in God in vs. 19, 20. *W. H. G.*

19. In the next breath Job turns for vindication to the very quarter whence he has supposed the injustice comes. In his thought he seems to divide the God who oppresses him from a God who loves him and represents his cause; at least he commits himself by a mighty reach of faith to an Advocate on high, though he does not clearly identify such an Advocate fully with God. Job evidently thinks of the Advocate as the Daysman whom he so longed for; and we see the advance he has made in faith by the fact that the being whose existence he despairingly denied then he now acknowledges with passionate assertion. *J. F. G.*

19. *Eren now*, in the very midst of my desolation, when I seem to be wholly without a supporter. In this verse Job prepares us for the great declaration (19 : 25). Up to this time he reaches, but does not go beyond the expression of his certainty that his righteousness is known; his one desire is that God will vindicate it; but he cannot rest there; the certainty and the desire combined cannot but issue in the sure hope of a future manifestation. God Himself is Job's witness, he has no other, all his trust is in Him who afflicts him. *Cook*.—As if Job had said, I fear no evidence that can

be brought against me on earth, and I rejoice in the witness which I have in heaven : though I have none to testify for me here, yet I have One who will testify for me above ; “ my Witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.” A good man dares appeal to God, and commit his cause to Him, deriving joy and comfort from the reflection that there is a God in heaven who knows his heart, and is the witness of all his ways. *Caryl.*

Already in chap. 10 Job had drawn a distinction between God of the present, who persecuted him as guilty though he was innocent, and God of the past, whose gracious care of him had been wonderful ; though there he grasped at a frightful reconciliation of the contradiction : God of the present, who destroyed him, seemed the real God, and His past mercies were no true expression of His nature. In chap. 14 Job reached out his hand into the darkness and clutched at another idea, a distinction between God of the present, who would pursue him unto death, and God of the future—God when His anger should be overpast and He would yearn again toward His creature, the work of His hands. This God of the future was God as He is in truth, true to His own past dealing and to man’s conceptions of Him. It is on this line of thought that the present passage moves. A. B. D.

Job says : “ God has done me apparent wrong. I am innocent and He has smitten me. It seems unjust, but there is right somewhere at the bottom of this mystery. God can vindicate Himself and right me. God can reconcile the three facts of my integrity, His justice, and my suffering. To God, and to none other, will I appeal. I am sure that He will hear this plea against Himself, and vindicate both Himself and me.” This is a most wonderful utterance in its boldness and faith. It is worthy of the highest Christian character—this faith which, with so little to hang upon, with so much arrayed to shake it, struggles up through desertion by God and man to the love in God’s heart which will not suffer Him finally to abandon His children ; a faith which fights down the hideous *phantom* of God raised by disease and an imperfect knowledge, and presses past it to the true God. Even with our Christian training, with our knowledge of the Divine, loving intent of chastening, do we not sometimes suffer our disappointment and our grief to frame for us a *phantom* God, with a frowning face behind the frowning Providence ? V.

20. Scorn me. Literally, *are my scorers*, or mockers, instead of being my witnesses. Because his friends mock him, and no sympathy

or insight is to be looked for from them, his eye *droppeth*—he appeals with tears to God (cf. Isa. 38 : 14). What Job desires of his Witness is that He would see right done him both with God and with men—with God, who wrongly held him guilty, and against men, his fellows, who, founding on God’s dealing with him, held him guilty also and were his mockers. A. B. D. —*My scorers are my friends* ; they who scorn me are those who ought to befriend me ; they have nothing but taunts and gibes to give me in place of comfort. The appeal to God proves how intimately Job is penetrated with the feeling of His real tenderness and love. “ Poureth out tears,” literally, *streams* ; the eye melts away, so to speak, in a flood of tears.

21. The meaning of this verse is, *Oh, that He* (that is, God Himself) *would plead for a man* (i.e., for me) *with God*. Job appeals from God to God ; as He is at once Accuser and Judge, so he prays that He would be also at once Advocate and Judge. Each aspiration becomes clearer and draws nearer to the unrevealed truth ; no “ daysman ” who is not, like the Judge Himself, all-knowing and Almighty, will suffice. *As a man pleadeth for his neighbor*. Either, “ and as a son of man for his fellow,” or, as Dillm. prefers, *and for the son of man* (i.e., Job) *against his neighbor*—i.e., that God would plead Job’s cause, first, before Himself as Judge ; secondly, against Job’s fellow-men. The designation which Job here applies to himself, *son of man*, is remarkable ; he feels that he really represents the cause of suffering humanity. We know of whom in this he was a true type. *Cook.*

Yet here his idea of the Advocate stops ; it must take another surge of faith before he connects his immortality therewith. J. F. G.

22. Go the way I shall not return. Without raiment, without money, we, our very selves, must pass the river. No sound from the street or market-place ; no news of the day ; no literature in any form to pass the time ; no amusement to distract ; no society to float us on from hour to hour ; no excitement to color the paleness of the landscape. All disguises stripped off ; all prejudices annihilated ; all errors refuted. However much luggage we may have accumulated by the way, all is taken from us at the station, which is the starting-point from whence we must walk toward the city of the great King, crowned with light, or that other city, whose streets are full of misery. *Bishop W. A.*

The hand of God was in these dreadful sor-

rows. Why had He sent them, or permitted them? Job was in utter darkness and perplexity, and the only solution which offered itself, and toward which he was persistently driven by antagonism to the inadmissible position urged upon him by his friends, was not reconcilable with the goodness or justice of God. Hence the tumult of his soul and the tempest of conflicting emotions which rages within him. Reason and sense urge him in one direction, and the strong recoil of faith drives him back in the other; and thus he is swayed perpetually to and fro, still hoping against hope, ever afresh seeking unto God who had cast him off, unable to escape from conclusions to which the logic of his sufferings seemed to constrain him, or to banish the forbidding spectre of an angry God which they perpetually raise before him, and yet holding fast to his inmost convictions, in spite of all that seems to contradict them. This

inward struggle of Job is vividly depicted in his successive speeches in reply to his friends. These lay bare all the workings of his soul, and the fearful agitation which was going on within him. They disclose the terrible conflict through which he was passing, in its various phases, until out of the depths of despair he fought his way to solid peace. They show what gloom and darkness had settled upon his path; to what spiritual straits he was reduced; but how in spite of all he never abandoned his faith in God. He staggered and tottered under the tremendous blows which were given him, and it seemed at times as though he could not recover himself and must fall. But somehow he always regained his footing, and never lost his balance entirely. The adversary was foiled, and the piety of Job, which he sought to undermine or to destroy, sustained the test and triumphed in the encounter. W. H. G.

CHAPTER XVII.

- 1 My spirit is consumed, my days are extinct,
The grave is *ready* for me.
- 2 Surely there are mockers with me,
And mine eye dwelleth upon their provocation.
- 3 Give now a pledge, be surety for me with thyself;
Who is there that will strike hands with me?
- 4 For thou hast hid their heart from understanding;
Therefore shalt thou not exalt *them*.
- 5 He that denounceth his friends for a prey,
Even the eyes of his children shall fail.
- 6 But he hath made me a byword of the people;
And I am become an open abhorring.
- 7 Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow,
And all my members are as a shadow.
- 8 Upright men shall be astonished at this,
And the innocent shall stir up himself
against the godless.

- 9 Yet shall the righteous hold on his way,
And he that hath clean hands shall wax
stronger and stronger.
- 10 But return ye, all of you, and come now:
And I shall not find a wise man among
you.
- 11 My days are past, my purposes are broken
off,
Even the thoughts of my heart.
- 12 They change the night into day:
The light, *say they*, is near unto the darkness.
- 13 If I look for Sheol as mine house;
If I have spread my couch in the darkness;
- 14 If I have said to corruption, Thou art my
father;
To the worm, *Thou art* my mother, and my
sister;
- 15 Where then is my hope?
And as for my hope, who shall see it?
- 16 It shall go down to the bars of Sheol,
When once there is rest in the dust.

THE style in the first ten verses of this chapter expresseth great discomposure. There are frequent and sudden changes of the person. The transitions are abrupt, without the joining particles; and the sentiments follow one another with little or no connection, just as the tumultuous and shifting emotions of his mind suggested them. From the eleventh verse to the

end of the discourse all is in the moving strain of elegy. With a melancholy calmness he resigns himself to despair and the grave. *Scott*. —As before he poured out so passionately his longing for instant death, so now, in the gentler mood that has come over his spirit, he anticipates the rest of the grave, and, bidding farewell to life, chants in strains of exquisite ten

denress his own requiem. But through this elegiac tone the strong, persistent, and almost triumphant protestation of innocence is always heard. The refining efficacy of affliction has already appeared in Job's gentler manner. It shows still more plainly in the purer form which his faith begins to take. *Aglen.*

1. Each of the three clauses of this verse expresses the same thought: Job's utter despair of life, and his reckoning himself as virtually dead already; he was standing on the verge of the grave; it is cruel mockery to promise him long life if he will repent. *Curry.*

2, 3. In this hopeless condition such offices of professed friendship as had been tendered him were only a mockery of his sufferings. Against this unkindness he pleads that God would undertake for him, and become surety for his innocence. *Conant.*

3. The meaning of this verse is clear; it refers altogether to the usual proceedings in a court of justice; each party in a suit had to deposit a pledge, or to find surety; the surety accepted the responsibility by striking hands with the person whom he represented. (See Prov. 6:1.) Job turns altogether from his friends; they are not to be depended upon. He calls upon God Himself to be Himself surety with Himself as Judge, to accept the position of Job's advocate. The expression "with Thee" is striking—be my surety with Thyself; no other mediation or advocacy is possible. *Cook.*

4-9. These verses support the petition in v. 3. If God will not undertake for Job none else will, for the hearts of his friends have been blinded. This thought of the perverse obstinacy and cruelty of his friends leads Job again to a gloomy survey of his whole condition. He is become a public contempt to mankind, and brought to the lowest ebb of mortal weakness and humiliation (vs. 6, 7). Such moral perversions on the earth astonish the righteous and rouse them to indignation against the wicked in their prosperity (v. 8). Yet they will not permit themselves to be misled by such things to err from the paths of rectitude. Full of moral terror as these perversions are, the righteous will in spite of them cleave to his righteousness. He will feel that he is in possession of the only true good, and even because of them, and though he sees the world under the rule of God given over to wrong, he will wax stronger and stronger in well doing (v. 9); an astonishing passage. *A. B. D.*

8, 9. The saints are described as upright men, honest and sincere, that act from a steady principle with a single eye. This was Job's

own character, and probably he speaks of such upright men especially as had been his intimates and associates. They are the innocent; not perfectly so, but it is what they aim at and press toward. Sincerity is evangelical innocence, and they that are upright are said to be *innocent from the great transgression* (Psalms 19:13). They are the righteous, who walk in the way of righteousness. They have clean hands, kept clean from the gross pollutions of sin, and, when spotted with infirmities, *washed with innocency* (Psalm 26:6). **H.**

9. He that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger. The passage teaches that those who do right shall increase in strength to do right. The hand is the instrument of action, and "clean hands" hence become the symbol of holy things, and of the absence of any appearance of unholy conduct. It is not the same as uprightness of heart, but something supplemental to it, and needful to constitute the character fairly complete in living grace. It is declared that he who, besides the uprightness of heart and the general innocence and righteousness of his way, is also careful to keep himself free from every spot that might stain his hands, shall wax stronger and stronger. Let none say, when taxed with uncleanness of hands, that their hearts are nevertheless right; that, although they fail often and would be better and do better, yet they have good meanings, and feel that they are upright before God. This is self-delusion. It is easier to keep the hands right than the heart right; and he whose hand is foul may depend upon it that his heart is fouler still. Where there is a clean heart there will be clean hands. It is of these two things taken together—the clean heart and the clean hand—as forming the perfection of godliness, that Job speaks when he says that the man thus complete in his character "shall wax stronger and stronger," or, as the original has it, "shall add strength," especially in time of trial and affliction. This is spiritual "strength." It is the same strength which the apostle had in view when he said (2 Cor. 4:16), "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." It cannot be otherwise. The man thus endowed is in a state of grace before God; and grace is a living thing, and while it lives must grow—even as the grain of mustard seed must increase to a large tree. It is in a time of trouble that this progress from strength to strength is most active and is most sensibly discerned; and we cannot doubt that it was this which Job had especially in view.

It is affliction that beyond all things gives proof of godliness, whether it be true or not. That which is untrue—that which has no firm foundation—cannot abide this test; but he whose heart is well established in grace not only does not fall off in time of trouble, but grows and increases in grace. *Kitto.*

“The righteous shall hold on his way.” Can we read these words and deny the perseverance of saints? An unseen hand will be over you, attractions too strong to be resisted will draw you, a spirit not your own will animate you, and you will hold on your way. “He that hath clean hands.” To have clean hands is the scriptural expression for a man who is living without any one known, wilful, deliberate sin. The forgiven man who lives purely “shall be stronger and stronger.” His conceptions of truth will grow continually firmer; his faith in that truth will strengthen; his power over his besetting sin will be greater; his ability for service will grow; his happy sense of God’s love and favor will increase. *J. V.*

Righteousness and innocence have no occasion to change their way. Experience shows them it is a safe way. He that walketh uprightly walketh surely. The righteous shall hold on his way because he walks with God. His way is an ever-brightening way, a way of pleasantness and peace, a way on which the traveller has the best of guidance and of help, for “the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord.” *V.*

A man whose life is pure and high may not open his lips, yet his very silence shall be eloquent for God. Day by day virtue is going out of him; day by day he is giving strength to one who is wrestling with doubt or temptation; day by day he is a beacon to those who are tossed on the waves of irresolution and uncertainty; day by day he is, without knowing it, a stay, a support, an encouragement to many who but for him would flag or be beaten down in the battle. *Perowne.*

Such as do not grow in grace decay in grace. There is no standing at a stay in religion, either we go forward or backward; if faith doth not grow, unbelief will; if heavenly-mindedness doth not grow, covetousness will. A man that doth not increase his stock diminisheth it; if you do not improve your stock of grace your stock will decay. The angels on Jacob’s ladder were either ascending or descending; if you do not ascend in religion, you descend. *T. Watson.*

In the development of Christian character and

in the fruits of the Christian life all valuable growth is slow. All permanent acquisition and abiding products are attained by the process of “patient continuance in well-doing.” A steadfast, calm persistence day by day, amid the common circumstances of life, in meeting the demands of each hour and event, under the pressure of no impulse or excitement, but of fixed, quiet yet fervent principle, doing every duty, private and personal, social and relative—*this* is affirmed directly and indirectly by the Word and providence of God to be the indispensable condition of permanence and growth in Christian character, of progress in Christian life and fruitfulness, and of success in Christian achievement. *B.*

10. As for you all, if you think fit, return to the charge, repeat your arguments; it is but what may be expected of you, for I can see no symptom of real wisdom in any of you; a bitter irony, but justified by God’s own declaration (42 : 7, 8).

11–16. No hope but in the grave; there is the ever-recurring thought; the question is, whether Job will find any hope *in* the grave, whether his *wish* will give birth to the hope of a future vindication.

11. Life with its objects and cares must perish; it is already gone. **Thoughts.** Literally, possessions; a fine expression for all that the heart and mind has acquired and cares to retain, its best thoughts, purposes, and imaginations.

13–16. These words express one thought with the variety and pertinacity of a spirit dwelling upon its hopelessness and exhausting its misery; there is no hope elsewhere, my only home now is the grave; there is my only rest, all that could comfort my heart, excite in it any sense of joy, is exchanged for rottenness, for the loathsome inmates of the grave. My hope is there, who can see it? To speak of hope on earth in life is a mockery; if there be a hope, it is to be found in the grave. Bearing in mind the aspiration of chap. 14 : 13–15 (the wish there so nearly resembling a hope, grounded on a principle which can scarcely exist without suggesting and confirming it), we do not find in this verse an expression of absolute hopelessness. We can scarcely resist the conclusion that although neither Job, nor, as he is well aware, any other living man of his own age, can see any definite ground for hope, he has at the bottom of his heart a feeling which assures him that Sheol, the region of the shadow of death, is not the last word of God to man. *Cook.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

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| <p>1 THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
 2 How long will ye lay snares for words ?
 Consider, and afterwards we will speak.
 3 Wherefore are we counted as beasts,
 And are become unclean in your sight ?
 4 Thou that tearest thyself in thine anger,
 Shall the earth be forsaken for thee ?
 Or shall the rock be removed out of its place ?
 5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out,
 And the spark of his fire shall not shine.
 6 The light shall be dark in his tent,
 And his lamp above him shall be put out.
 7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened,
 And his own counsel shall cast him down.
 8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet,
 And he walketh upon the toils.
 9 A gin shall take <i>him</i> by the heel,
 And a snare shall lay hold on him.
 10 A noose is hid for him in the ground,
 And a trap for him in the way.
 11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side,
 And shall chase him at his heels.
 12 His strength shall be hungerbitten,
 And calamity shall be ready at his side.</p> | <p>13 It shall devour the members of his body,
 Yea, the firstborn of death shall devour his members.
 14 He shall be rooted out of his tent wherein he trusteth ;
 And he shall be brought to the king of terrors.
 15 There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his :
 Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.
 16 His roots shall be dried up beneath,
 And above shall his branch be cut off.
 17 His remembrance shall perish from the earth,
 And he shall have no name in the street.
 18 He shall be driven from light into darkness,
 And chased out of the world.
 19 He shall have neither son nor son's son among his people,
 Nor any remaining where he sojourned.
 20 They that come after shall be astonished at his day,
 As they that went before were affrighted.
 21 Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous,
 And this is the place of him that knoweth not God.</p> |
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SECOND SPEECH OF BILDAD.

IN this angry and intemperate speech of Bildad it is difficult to discern any advance, or even variety of argument. It consists of vituperations, in which the words used by Job to describe his misery are taken as applicable, universally and exclusively, to the calamities which befall the wicked. There is no suggestion of hope, no admonition even which would indicate the possibility of amendment. Job is to Bildad henceforth simply as one that "knoweth not God" (v. 21). In the discourses of Job there is a steady onward progress; the distinction between the appearance and the reality continually becomes clearer; his aspirations assume a more definite form, gradually approaching the confines of hope; and the consciousness of inward integrity, with a full perception of man's natural and inherent sinfulness, and his own participation in it through the passions of youth and the infirmity at all seasons of life, finds ever a more forcible and evangelical expression. But in direct contrast with this, in the speeches of each and all the interlocutors, the change is altogether from better to worse, from sympathy to alienation, from well ordered reasoning to senseless and cruel upbraidings, from vindica-

tion of God's justice to uncandid and violent representations of the effects of His vengeance. In the following speech, and in the answer of Job, we find the central crisis of the discussion. On the one hand, the fury of the incensed friends is well-nigh exhausted; on the other, the hope of a perfect vindication (inseparably bound up with an instinctive, though undeveloped and half-conscious belief in a future resurrection), for the first time takes the form, which has been recognized by believers in all ages as the sublimest utterance of a devout and heaven-taught spirit, brooding on the mystery of life and anticipating its true solution.

1-4. Job is blamed for idle words, contempt of his friends, vain and desperate struggles, and useless aspirations. *Cook.*—Bildad here shoots his arrows, even bitter words, against poor Job, little thinking that in this instance he was serving Satan's design, in adding to Job's affliction. He charges him with idle, endless talk, as Eliphaz had done; with a disregard of what was said to him (v. 2); with a haughty contempt of his friends (v. 3); with outrageous passion and an arrogant desire to give law even to Providence itself (v. 4). H.

5-21. *The disastrous end of the wicked, in the*

moral order of the world, is certain. The idea is set out in a great variety of graphic figures, and the speech is studded with sententious and proverbial sayings in the manner of the speaker's first discourse (chap. 8). The history of the wicked man's downfall is followed through all its stages: 5-7. The principle—the sinner's light goes out. 8-11. The progress of his downfall. 12-14. The final scenes. 15-17. The extinction of his race and name. 18-21. Men's horror of his fate and memory. A. B. D.

The ruin and misery of the wicked, the destruction of his race, the extinction of his very name, are described with much force and variety of imagery, but without any new thought. As in his former speech, Bildad rests altogether on the recorded facts and sayings of the past. *Cook.*

—The description is terribly brilliant, solemn, and pathetic, as becomes the stern preacher of repentance with haughty mien and pharisaic self-confidence; it is none the less beautiful, and, considered in itself, also true—a masterpiece of skill in idealizing. *Delitzsch.*

7. The cunning of a wicked man often defeats itself. A man's sin will not only be found out, but *will find him out*. It is only another form of expressing Paul's words, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Bildad gives us this truth when he says of the wicked, "His own counsel shall cast him down." The *inevitable, natural, only* outcome of evil is entanglement, stumbling, confusion, ruin to the evil-doer. V.

11. Terrors on every side. A striking personification; the inward terrors take a bodily form, are realized, and beset him without intermission; the very symptoms which Job had described so vividly, in the vain hope of exciting compassion (3 : 25 and 7 : 14). *Cook.*

14, 15. Death itself is called "the king of terrors" in distinction from the terrible disease which is called its "firstborn." Death is also personified by Isaiah (28 : 15), and in the Psalms (49 : 15) as a ruler in Hades, as in the Indian mythology the name of the infernal King *Jamas* signifies the tyrant or tamer. The biblical representation does not recognize a king of Hades; but the judicial power of death is allotted to angels, of whom one, the angel of the abyss, is called *Abaddon* (Rev. 9 : 11); and the chief possessor of this judicial power—he having the power of death (Heb. 2 : 14)—the angel prince who according to the prologue of our book has also brought a fatal disease upon Job, without, however, in this instance, being able to go further than to bring him to the brink of the

grave. But since Job himself and the friends trace back directly to God that mysterious affliction which forms the dramatic knot, we may understand by the king of terrors death itself. After the evildoer is tormented for awhile and made tender, and reduced to ripeness for death by the firstborn of death, he falls into the possession of the king of terrors himself; slowly and solemnly, but surely and inevitably (like the march of a criminal to the place of execution) he is led to this king by an unseen arm. The description next advances another step into the calamity of the evildoer's habitation; "brimstone" is strewed over it, to mark it as suffering the fulfilment of the curse, and not again to be rebuilt or inhabited. *Delitzsch.*

16-20. His roots shall be dried up. The figure is changed, but the thought is the same—the complete overthrow and destruction of the evildoer; as a tree "his roots shall be dried up," and his branches *cut off*; as a man among men his *name shall perish*, the execrations of men shall chase him *out of the world*; as a father he shall leave behind him *neither son nor son's son*, and if remembered at all after his death it shall be only as a spectacle of retribution for sin. *Curry.*

21. That knoweth not God. The climax of all charges is a direct denial of Job's most solemn protestations. *Cook.*—Bildad wrote under the picture which he had drawn, *these are the habitations of the wicked*, and held it up before Job. It was meant for him, for all that is specific in it is borrowed from the circumstances of his case. The terrible distemper, the "firstborn of death," that consumes the sinner's limbs, is too plain an allusion to his leprosy to be misunderstood by him (v. 13). The brimstone that burns up the sinner's habitation (v. 15), though there may lie in it a distant reference to the cities of the plain, is also the fire of God that fell on Job's cattle and their keepers (1 : 16). The tree dried up at the roots and withered in the branches (v. 16) reminds Job easily enough of his own wasted state and of the sad calamities that had blighted his home. The horror and detestation of men (v. 20) is but a picture of what was passing before the eyes of the disputants, and is a touch of ruthless severity, which brings Job utterly to the dust; for while in his former speech (chaps. 16, 17) he is able in the strong sense of his innocence to resent the treatment of men, he is here wholly broken by it (19 : 21). Every sentence of Bildad's speech carries with it the charge, Thou art the man. A. B. D.

CHAPTER XIX.

- 1 THEN Job answered and said.
 2 How long will ye vex my soul,
 And break me in pieces with words ?
 3 These ten times have ye reproached me :
 Ye are not ashamed that ye deal hardly with
 me.
 4 And be it indeed that I have erred,
 Mine error remaineth with myself.
 5 If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against
 me,
 And plead against me my reproach :
 6 Know now that God hath subverted me *in my*
cause,
 And hath compassed me with his net.
 7 Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not
 heard :
 I cry for help, but there is no judgment.
 8 He hath fenced up my way that I cannot
 pass,
 And hath set darkness in my paths.
 9 He hath stripped me of my glory,
 And taken the crown from my head.
 10 He hath broken me down on every side, and
 I am gone :
 And mine hope hath he plucked up like a tree.
 11 He hath also kindled his wrath against me,
 And he counteth me unto him as *one of* his
 adversaries.
 12 His troops come on together, and cast up
 their way against me,
 And encamp round about my tent.
 13 He hath put my brethren far from me,
 And mine acquaintance are wholly estranged
 from me.
 14 My kinsfolk have failed,
 And my familiar friends have forgotten me.
 15 They that dwell in mine house, and my
 maids, count me for a stranger :
 I am an alien in their sight.
- 16 I call unto my servant, and he giveth me no
 answer,
Though I intreat him with my mouth.
 17 My breath is strange to my wife,
 And my supplication to the children of my
 own mother.
 18 Even young children despise me ;
 If I arise, they speak against me.
 19 All my inward friends abhor me :
 And they whom I loved are turned against
 me.
 20 My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh,
 And I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.
 21 Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O
 ye my friends ;
 For the hand of God hath touched me.
 22 Why do ye persecute me as God,
 And are not satisfied with my flesh ?
 23 Oh that my words were now written !
 Oh that they were inscribed in a book !
 24 That with an iron pen and lead
 They were graven in the rock for ever !
 25 But as for me, I know that my redeemer
 liveth,
 And at last he shall stand up upon the earth ;
 26 And after my skin, *even* this *body*, is de-
 stroyed,
 Then without my flesh shall I see God :
 27 Whom I, even I, shall see on my side,
 And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a
 stranger.
 My reins are consumed within me.
 28 If ye say, How we will persecute him !
 Seeing that the root of the matter is found
 in me ;
 29 Be ye afraid of the sword :
 For wrath *bringeth* the punishments of the
 sword,
 That ye may know there is a judgment.

FROM the abyss of darkness and cheerless despondency Job struggles constantly upward toward the light. In each successive speech there is some fresh reaching out toward help or hope. Every address made by his friends shows him more and more plainly that nothing is to be looked for or expected from them ; they still persist in refusing to him even that measure of relief or consolation which human sympathy might supply. Cut off from all earthly assistance or even pity, there is no one but God to whom he can have recourse. And here he is torn by conflicting feelings. God is persecut-

ing and afflicting him, and, to all outward appearance, is treating him as an enemy. And still he cannot let go that inward persuasion, which manifests itself at first but dimly, and yet grows in clearness and strength as he recurs to it, that God will not altogether withhold His favor from him. Each time that he essays to speak, sense and faith stand in blank antagonism. His sufferings press overwhelmingly upon him with their apparent evidence that God is against him. But faith comes with its whispers, scarcely audible, and yet refusing to be stifled, that God must nevertheless be on his side. These sug-

gestions of his unquenched confidence in God are only hypothetical at first. If such an obstacle were only removed, or if such a condition could only exist, then God would surely manifest Himself in his favor. But the obstacle remains; the condition is impossible to be realized; and so he sinks back each time into a state of unrelieved despondency and gloom. But his despair is no longer absolute and total. These suggestions of faith and hope gradually assume a more definite form, and take upon themselves more reality. They gain in strength, and come to a fuller utterance with each successive response he makes to his friends, until at last they grow into a clear and decided conviction, which vanquishes the temptation completely and forever by the language of triumphant assurance, "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" W. H. G.

Chap. 19. After a brief expostulation (vs. 2-4) Job declares, in the strongest possible language, his conviction that the calamities, which he enumerates with greater force and fulness than in any preceding discourse, are not reconcilable with any known principle of the Divine government; they come from God, and cannot be justified by such reasonings as those which he has repeatedly refuted (vs. 6-20); they ought to excite pity; man ought to sympathize with his fellow when he is smitten by God. This course of thought issues in a complete triumph of the inner principle. He calls attention to the words which he is about to speak, as the only ones which deserve a perpetual record, which sum up the whole of his convictions, and will endure forever. His cause, being the cause of righteousness, is secure; for God (who has hitherto but shown Himself in wrath, in terror, in accusations, as an object of mysterious awe and terror) is Himself his Redeemer, a Redeemer now living in heaven, hereafter to be manifested in earth; to be seen after the destruction of Job's whole bodily frame by Job's own eyes. He concludes with an emphatic warning, that they who judge harshly will be judged unsparingly. *Cook.*

Job realizes from Bildad's words, more clearly than before, his dreary isolation, God and men being alike estranged from him, which he laments in most pathetic words. But so profound and unalterable is his consciousness of his innocence, that at the moment when he has entered step after step into the thickest darkness he makes a sudden leap out into the light, and rises by an inspiration to the assurance that his innocence shall yet be revealed, that God will yet publicly appear for him, and that he shall see God.

The order of thought is well marked: First (vs. 2-6), some preliminary words, as usual, of a personal kind, though these are here fewer, the speaker's mind being filled with greater things. He gives brief expression to his impatience of his friends' diatribes, and repudiates the inferences they drew from his calamities; his calamities were due to God, who had perverted his right. Second (vs. 7-27), this reference to God leads over to the theme of the whole chapter, which is nothing but God. The sufferer's mind wrestles with his thought of God—the thought of Him as the Author of his present terrible fate, from which he rises by a sudden revulsion to the thought of Him as One who must yet appear as his vindicator and joy. This part has three steps: A dark picture of the desertion of God and His terrible hostility to him (vs. 7-12). Then even a more touching complaint of the alienation of men from him—which God has caused (vs. 13-22). Hopeless in the present, he turns his eye to the future. He desires that his protest of innocence might find indelible record in the rock, that the generations to come might read it. Yet how small a thing that would be to *him*, whose chief sorrow lay in the alienation of God from his spirit. He shall have more. He *knows* that God shall yet appear to vindicate him, and that he shall see Him with his eyes—in peace (vs. 23-27). Finally he adds a brief threat to his friends (vs. 28, 29). A. B. D.

2, 3. Three points are urged: his friends' cruelty, their pertinacity, and their injustice. *Cook.*

4-6. Let it be granted that I am in an error; if ye, upon that ground, "magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach," then, "know that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with His net;" this answer may put you to silence. As if he had said, The hand of God is upon me; why do you lift up your heads against me? *Caryl.*—If they really maintain that he is suffering on account of flagrant sins, he meets them on the ground of this assumption with the assertion that God has wronged him and has cast His net over him, so that he is indeed obliged to endure punishment. In other words: If his suffering is really not to be understood otherwise than as the punishment of sin, as they would uncharitably and censoriously persuade him, it urges on his self-consciousness, which rebels against it, to the conclusion which he hurls into their face as one which they themselves have provoked. *Delitzsch.*

5, 6. A direct statement that, if he be condemned on the ground that God has put him to

shame, he is prepared to prove that the providential dispensation, as understood by his friends, is not just. The word is purposely strong, He hath overthrown, or rather perverted me, dealt with me unjustly. It must be borne in mind, that the object of the Divine dispensation was precisely the reverse of what Job's friends had assumed it to be ; that it was not intended to punish his guilt, but to test and prove his righteousness ; interpreted as they interpreted it, it would have been a perversion of justice. *Cook.*

7. In the unshrinking truthfulness with which he utters his inmost feelings, we are startled by the boldness and seeming irreverence with which he arraigns the rectitude of the Divine proceedings. But it is not the daring recklessness of presumptuous speculation intruding on the unrevealed ; nor is it the profane utterance of the impious transgressor blaspheming his Maker. It is the transparent sincerity of the tempted soul, driven almost to distraction by suggestions which are forced upon him and which he cannot shut out. In his conscious integrity he denies the righteousness of any infliction which charges that upon him of which he is not guilty ; he denies the justice of executing sentence upon him for crimes of which he was free. If God, in sending these sufferings upon him, has marked him out as a criminal, as his friends allege, then He has perverted justice, He has done him wrong. *W. H. G.*

9-12. Which way soever Job looked, he thought he saw the tokens of God's displeasure against him. Did he look back upon his former prosperity ? He saw God's hand putting an end to that (v. 9) : "*He has stripped me of my glory, my wealth, honor, power, and all the opportunity I had of doing good ; my children were my glory, but I have lost them ; and whatever was a crown to my head, He has taken it from me, and has laid all mine honor in the dust.*" Did he look down upon his present troubles ? He saw God giving them their commission, and their orders to attack him. They are His troops, that act by His direction, which *encamp against me* (v. 12). It did not so much trouble him that his miseries came upon him in troops, as that they were *God's* troops, in whom it seemed as if God fought against him and intended his destruction. Time was when God's hosts encamped round him for safety ; *Hast Thou not made a hedge about him ?* Now, on the contrary, they surrounded him to his terror ; and *destroyed him on every side* (v. 10). Did he look forward for deliverance ? He saw the hand of God cutting off all hopes of that ; (v. 8) "*He hath fenced up my way, that I cannot pass ;*" I have now no

way left to help myself, either to extricate myself out of my troubles, or to ease myself under them. *H.*

11. The climax, God deals with him as an enemy. What makes this so appalling but Job's own ineradicable love and faith ? The complaint tells of natural weakness, but proves spiritual firmness : God may appear to forsake him, he will not renounce God.

12. His troops. All things that work together for man's weal or woe are God's apparitors, the executors of His will. *Cook.*

13-21. Job's complaint now is even more touching than before ; God not only afflicted him with trouble, but removed far from him all human sympathy. And there is something more breaking to the heart in the turning away of men from us than in the severest sufferings. It crushes us quite. We steel ourselves against it for a time and rise to it in bitterness and resentment, but gradually it breaks us, and we are crushed at last. And this seems the way, whether men frown on us with justice or no. And there came on Job when he contemplated his complete casting off by men, by his friends and his household and even by the little children, a complete break-down, and he cries, Pity me, O ye my friends. *A. B. D.*

20, 21. Wasted away to a skeleton, and become both to sight and smell a loathsome object—such is the sufferer the friends have before them ; one who is tortured, besides, by a dark conflict which they only make more severe ; one who now implores them for pity, and because he has no pity to expect from man, presses forward to a hope which reaches beyond the grave. *Delitzsch.*—The last and strongest appeal to human pity, but made in vain ; the hand of God had touched him, so they esteemed him "smit-ten of God and afflicted." That was to them the very ground why they would not pity him. *Cook.*—Overcome by his sense of the terrible enmity of God, Job piteously cries out for the compassion of men. There is a strong antithesis between "ye my friends" and the "hand of God." The whole speech, even when the enmity of men is referred to (v. 13, *seq.*), is occupied with the thought of God ; he is regarded as the cause of man's abhorrence. *A. B. D.*

22. "*Why do ye persecute me as God ?*" Surely His rebukes are enough for one man to bear, you need not add your wormwood and gall to the cup of affliction He puts into my hand. If they did delight in his calamity, let them be satisfied with his flesh, which was wasted and gone, but let them not wound his spirit and ruin his good name. *H.*

23-29. The great declaration of the book introduced with words of unusual solemnity ; whatever may become of other words, whether wrung from him by misery, or expressing yearnings, aspirations, or even hope, Job will have this recorded, for it speaks of a *certainly*. *Cook.*

23, 24. Perceiving that he had made no impression upon them, the afflicted patriarch suddenly raises his voice and expresses his ardent desire that the words he had uttered in his own defence should be recorded in some enduring memorial. It is clear that the loss of character is involved in the imputations which the friends shower upon him. All other evils are in his view light to this ; and what he desires is not so much deliverance from his misery, as the vindication of his integrity. And thus he practically refutes the, to him unknown, insinuations of Satan, that his piety was founded on selfish motives. *Kitto.*—That which Job here somewhat passionately wished for, God graciously granted him ; his words are written, they are printed in God's Book ; so that wherever that Book is read there shall this be told for a memorial concerning Job, He believed, therefore he spake. *H.*

We give the translation which seems to us preferable :

“ O that my words were now recorded !
O that they were engraven on a tablet !
With an iron grave, upon lead ;
That they were graven in a rock forever.”

The careful reader will here find four ideas, rising to a climax in the grandest and most durable form of writing. Job first expresses a wish that his words were simply written down or recorded in the ordinary mode, without specifying any. He then goes on to engraving or writing on tablets, that may have been of wood, earthenware, or bone. Then he comes to the process of writing on tablets of soft metal, with a pen or stylus of harder metal, a pen of iron on tablets of lead. Lastly, he would have them “ graven in the rock forever.” It was certainly a grand idea for man to think of committing to the living rock, and of thus giving a magnificent permanency to the record of his history and his thoughts. Many such monuments of the most ancient date have been found in various countries, but none more extensive or remarkable than those in the Written Mountains of Sinai. These inscriptions are found in the hills and valleys which run toward the northwest to the vicinity of the eastern shore of the Gulf of Suez. *Kitto.*

This desire to have his words inscribed upon

the rock is not so much an introduction to what follows as the conclusion of what precedes. It represents not his rising consciousness of triumph, but rather his lowest depth of desolation and hopeless despair, joined with his inward consciousness of integrity, that demands some recognition. Bereft of every helper, human and Divine, crushed beneath an unrighteous sentence, his appeals to God unheard, and his friends joining in the merciless persecution, he asks that the rocks may take up his dying declaration, and that his words may be indelibly written there, so that the imperishable stone may speak his innocence of these false charges, and testify of the wrong that has been done him, after his own voice is hushed. And thus his appeal to the rocks to transmit his defence to all coming time will be parallel to his passionate apostrophe to the earth in his last preceding speech (16 : 18) : “ O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place.” It is the outcry of one hopelessly overwhelmed by unjust imputations and wrongful treatment, but to whom his integrity is dearer than his life, and who insists that what is true and right shall have the assertion to which it is entitled ; and who cannot but believe after all that eternal justice shall find a response somewhere and at some time. *W. H. G.*

The desire suddenly seizes Job to make his appeal to posterity, to record in writing his protestation of his innocence, or to grave it in the rock, that when he is gone men might read it to all time. Yet this thought satisfies him but for a moment. Even if the generations to come should not only mitigate but reverse the judgment of his contemporaries, how small a thing that would be to him ! And his mind rebounds from this thought forward to a greater—he *knows* that His redeemer liveth and shall appear for his vindication and peace. *A. B. D.*

In the very reaction from his despair of human help, he suddenly rises to the highest level which he attains in the book, “ to a point where he catches a prophetic sight of a larger hope and utters the sublime words which more than any others have become associated with his name.” *V.*—All at once he breaks out into that avowal which for all the ages since has remained the supreme utterance of the Book of Job, which gathers into one mighty assurance the solution of all his problems, the final reach of his aspiring faith, revealing in one view the Advocate on high, the vindication beyond death, God his restored friend—and binding all together with the exultant word, *I know*. *J. F. G.*

Job has already expressed a wish that there

might be an *umpire* between him and God ; then he goes further and desires an *advocate* ; then declares that he has a *witness*, One who exactly knows his rights, in heaven ; then calls upon God Himself to be his advocate. He now takes a stronger position, and declares his certainty that there is One who adds to all these conditions that which gives them solidity, and assures his final triumph ; there lives One who will vindicate his righteousness and clear his cause completely. *Cook.*

This passage forms the grand climax in the utterances of Job's faith, to which he has from the first been slowly but steadily rising. It is the turning-point in his discussions with his friends, the culmination and the close of his sore inward conflict, the full and complete outcoming of a trust which has been gradually gathering strength in the face of the most formidable opposition, and struggling to find expression, and the crowning victory over Satan's fiercest and most subtle temptation. It is faith planting itself firmly on the unseen, when not one single external ground of support remains. Who the Redeemer is in whom Job thus affirms his confidence cannot admit of a moment's doubt. It is the same of whom he had declared in his preceding speech (16 : 19), "My Witness is in heaven, and my record is on high ;" and whom he had supplicated to be his Surety (17 : 3) when all others refused to espouse his cause ; and of whose sentence in his favor he had again and again expressed his strong assurance, if his cause could but be brought before Him so as to obtain His decision. Now all doubts have vanished ; every condition that had previously clogged his hopes is removed. The Lord has undertaken for him. The Lord has engaged upon his side. The Lord will defend him against all injury and wrong. God, who seems to be persecuting him with such relentless hostility, is not his Enemy. The Witness to his integrity on high, to whom he had appealed to become his Surety, becomes his Redeemer, the Avenger of his innocent blood, vindicating him, appearing as his Champion, and on his behalf, and, as he in the verses next ensuing warns his friends, punishing them that have done him wrong. W. H. G.

The conception of an Invisible One who can "be wrought to sympathy" with human hopes and fears grows clearer with every utterance of the sufferer. At last there comes one of those flashes of inspiration by which from time to time God heralds His fuller revelation. Whatever be the literal meaning of this celebrated passage, from which to English ears thoughts

of an incarnate Saviour and a resurrection from the dead can never be dissociated, it is certain that it leaps in its large aspiration far beyond the purest hopes that up to this time had stirred even Hebrew hearts. In the intense feeling that justice must and will be done, Job is made to cast one marvellous look through the mysterious darkness of death, and see God, his Avenger, stand, as it were, above his dust and vindicate his character upon his grave. In this great hope he is able himself to live again, and to appropriate the living Redeemer, and look upon Him when the skin is wasted from his bones and his body destroyed. *Aglen.*

Whatever may happen, he shall not perish ; leprosy may eat up his flesh, and even consume his bones ; his friends may bring against him the gravest charges, but what does it matter ? It is to God alone that he will for the future carry his appeal. He is sure of God—yes, sure of Him even at the very time when this God seems to be doing everything to ruin him. Does he express in these words his hope of a mere *cure*, when it shall please God to suspend the ravages of leprosy, and to say to that incurable disease, "Thus far and no farther ?" Or does he, despairing of all cure here below, cast himself upon the certainty of a *resurrection*, properly so called ? Between these two interpretations which have divided commentators, would not Job perhaps have himself hesitated ? Does he not feel his ignorance as to how God will dispose of this body, this living skeleton, in which he is still suffering and groaning ? But what he does know for certain is that, whether by means of a cure, or else by means of a resurrection, *live he shall*—for his Redeemer lives. All the truths that Jesus draws (in Matt. 22 : 32) from the expression, "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," are comprehended in this cry of faith from the patriarch : "My Redeemer liveth !" *Godet.*

I know. It is a bold challenge made by a suffering man to the ages. The ring of conviction resounds in every line and fills the air with its thrilling music. Three distinct assertions follow this quickening preface. First, he declares that God is the Vindicator of right-seeking and right-doing men. Of the *fact* he is sure ; of the how and when and where he says nothing ; but an invincible faith that before the "last" moment in his history comes God will be his Redeemer from all the ills of which he is now the victim animates and sustains his suffering spirit. Job is sure that he himself, in his own conscious person, will be the rejoicing witness of that Divine vindication. The chief,

the conquering, the most meritorious quality in Job's mood of mind is his clear and steadfast recognition of the real but dimly revealed law that the suspension of the accepted and outward manifestations of the Divine care and regard is not the suspension of the Divine sympathy, nor the withdrawal of the Divine love and help. *J. Clifford.*

My Redeemer. With an intense significance the great word *goel* ("Redeemer" or "Vindicator") is invested in virtue of its general use throughout the Old Testament. The *goel* was the near kinsman in Israel on whom the right and duty of redeeming were devolved. The *goel* brought back the forfeited inheritance; redeemed the slave; avenged the slain; perpetuated the family name and heirship among the families and estates in Israel. In fine, he was the redeeming, avenging, vindicating, perpetuating kinsman; whose name and deeds must have come to be embalmed in tearful, joyful family memories. And *this* is the word employed by Job when he passionately exclaims: "But I know that my Goel—my redeeming kinsman—liveth." *Anon.*—The *goel* means any one who has the right and duty to vindicate one who has suffered wrong. Job certainly did not believe that any man was in that position; the only Goel he could possibly rely upon was the living God. *Cook.*

My Redeemer liveth. "Liveth" means more than *is*, *exists*. Job uses the word in opposition to himself—he dies, but his Redeemer lives after him. Job has in God a Goel who liveth. This Goel will vindicate his rights against the wrong both of men and God. At the same time, this vindication is regarded less as an avenging of him than as a manifestation of his innocence. This manifestation can only be made by God's appearing and showing the true relation in which Job stands to Him, and by Job's seeing God. For his distress lay in God's hiding His face from him, and his redemption must come through his again beholding God in peace. Thus the ideas of Goel and Redeemer virtually coincide. A. B. D.

It may not be without its deeper significance and its divinely intended meaning that the term "Redeemer" had the association linked with it, both in patriarchal and Mosaic usage, of the next of kin. Is there not here possibly a shadowing forth of more than Job himself intended or imagined when he used the word? an index pointing to that Divine Redeemer, who is, withal, our nearest Kinsman, and who allied Himself to us in the bonds of our common humanity, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that He

might have a kinsman's right to espouse our cause, to vindicate us from the accusations of the law, and free us from the sentence of death written in our members, and open to us life and immortality with the beatific vision of God. W. H. G.

26. The whole expression "after this my skin has been destroyed and without my flesh" means "when I have died under the ravages of my disease." The words do not express *in* what condition precisely, but *after* what events Job shall see God. A. B. D.—Job certainly did not expect that the manifestation would be granted before death. Whether in the body or out of the body, he was sure that after the utter destruction of his frame—of the last fragment of his physical being, he would see God with his own eyes. *Cook.*

Job knows the just God too well not to be sure that his upright disposition toward God will come to light after death, if not before, and in such a way that he himself will be present in personal vitality. The certainty of a life after death is here born out of painful conflict. What in chap. 14 : 13 was mere longing desire, in chap. 16 : 18 took the shape of bold demand, and here has become joyous certainty—namely, that even death cannot bury the right. This *Goel* is none else than *Eloah* (16 : 19), his seeming opponent. He has a representative who is *living*, not subject to death. And the satisfaction which God grants him is that he will behold Him, after death, the God who now hides Himself from him. The dark riddle is solved and the ban broken. The greatest bliss a believer can conceive is this beholding of God. But grand as is this inward conquest of death through the certainty of righteousness in God's sight and fellowship with Him, still the passage does not, as has been thought, contain a direct Messianic prophecy. *Orelli.*

I shall see God. The last words explain who Job's Redeemer or Goel is, and who He is who remaineth or shall come after him—viz., God. After his skin is destroyed and without his flesh he shall see God. Before death he shall not see Him, for he shall die under His afflicting hand (cf. 23 : 14), but he shall yet behold Him. To *see* God is to see Him reconciled and in peace, for this is implied in seeing Him at all, because now He hides His face.

27. These words might mean merely, whom I myself shall see; or, *for myself* may mean, favorable to me, on my side and to my joy. A. B. D.

Away from his flesh he shall see God, his Vindicator, his Looser. The core of his trouble

has been that God hid Himself ; he could not see Him ; he could not come into court with Him and plead his cause face to face. He shall see God at last, plead his cause and receive his vindication. For that face-to-face vision and vindication, for *that*, he says, "my reins are consumed within me." V.—The latter words are an exclamation, meaning, *I faint*. The reins are the seat of the deepest feelings and experiences, especially of those toward God. Job began with expressing his assurance that he should see God, but as he proceeds, so vivid is his hope that it becomes almost reality, the intensity of his thought creates an ecstatic condition of mind in which the vision of God seems almost realized, and he faints in the presence of it. Everything here centres in the assurance that he shall see God ; and this steady faith is expressed in each of the three verses, with only verbal variations. . . . The great idea of the passage is the manifestation of the Divine Deliverer, and that single idea is expressed first in direct and concise terms, and next with accompanying conditions. The main thought in Job's mind is that God will appear to vindicate his innocence and that he shall see God to his joy ; the question whether this shall be in this life or beyond it is of only secondary importance. Being himself conscious of his own rectitude, and believing that God also knew it, he fell back upon the assurance that in spite of the greatness and completeness of his present desolation, God would somehow become his Vindicator. There is an evident antithesis of thought between Job's anticipated *death* and his hope of a *living Redeemer*. I shall return to the *dust*, but He shall stand over my *dust*. The vindication may not be *now*, in my flesh, but in the *hereafter*, without my flesh, so joining together the laying aside of the flesh and the putting on of immortality. A. B. D.

28, 29. It is quite in accordance with Job's custom elsewhere to follow one of his passages of deep and true insight by a note of warning in which the friends' purblindness is recognized. This is the most solemn passage of the kind, as befits the lofty reach of faith that precedes it. J. F. G.—The probable rendering is this : "If ye shall say, 'how shall we persecute him?' and 'the root of the matter is found in me,' then be ye afraid of the sword for yourselves, for scorn is one of the sins of the sword, so that ye will know that there is a judgment." If this rendering be accepted, the former verse would describe the acts and words of Job's persecutors, who cast about how they may heap indignities upon him, and attribute the root or cause of all

that has happened to his own sin ; the second verse (29) warns them of the sure penalty, the sword of Divine wrath will punish them deservedly ; for such burning scorn is a capital offence, and they will learn by their own experience that there is a righteous Judge. Cook.

From this point onward Job no more struggles with the problem of death ; a fact which indicates that the immortality here recognized is henceforth taken for granted. Nor is God any more regarded as an enemy. J. F. G.

The Christology of the Book is indirect. There are no express references to the Messiah, though several passages may seem unconscious prophecies of Him, as those that express Job's desire to meet and see God as a man (9 : 32 ; 23 : 3). Job's *Goel* or Redeemer is God. A distinction of persons in the Godhead was not present to his thoughts when he used this term ; though the conception of God in the passage and many things said in it may find verification in God's manifestation of Himself in His Son. The strange distinction which Job draws between God and God, God who persecutes him and God who is his Witness and Redeemer, is of course not a christological distinction, nor one that corresponds to any distinction in the Godhead made known to us by subsequent revelation. The distinction was one which Job's ideas almost compelled him to draw. He believed that every event that occurred came immediately from God's hand ; and he believed that every event that befell a man reflected the disposition of God's mind toward him ; calamity indicated the anger and prosperity the favor of God. This second superstition is the source of all his perplexities ; and the distinction which he draws between God and God is his effort to overcome it. God whom he appeals against is the rule and course of this world, the outer providence of God, to which Job can give no name but "God." God to whom he appeals is the inner mind of God toward His servants, the moral ideal of the human heart. This is God his Witness and Redeemer. Job succeeded in drawing this distinction ; but the reconciliation which the distinction demanded he was only partially successful in effecting. He could not reach the idea that God, the heart of God, might be toward him, while God—the outer course of the world—afflicted him. These two things could not be at the same time. But they might succeed one another. Hence his reconciliation is temporal ; God will bring him unto death, but after his body is destroyed God shall appear to

vindicate him and he shall see God. The doctrine of Immortality in the Book is the same as that of other parts of the Old Testament. Immortality is the corollary of Religion. If there be religion—that is, if God be, there is immortality, not of the soul but of the whole personal being of man. This teaching of the whole Old Testament is expressed by our Lord with a surprising incisiveness in two sentences—“I am the *God* of Abraham. God is not the God of the dead but of the *living*.” A. B. D.

We have in vs. 25–27 the undoubted utterance of the truth of the higher hope which looks joyfully beyond physical death into the immortality of the soul. It is true that this hope is as yet without any of the luxuriant developments of it which were often carried beyond all proportion in later times; we see it here quite in its first fresh germination as a new and certain view, just as it springs forth from an inward necessity. The view that Job expresses here an earthly hope, and does not at all speak of the time after death, is indeed *totally false*. It is opposed to the words themselves, to the connection of the thoughts, and sins against the meaning of the whole Book, and against the plain advance from 14 : 13–15; 16 : 18, *seq.*, and finally to this passage. *Ewald*.—The Book of Job is throughout a very hymn of immortality. If this world were all, all was lost for Job; God was a terrible enigma; chance was God; providence was but a name. But Job, in the depth of his anguish, “*knows* that his Redeemer liveth, and that without his flesh he shall behold God.” H. P. L.

The doctrine of immortality comes in solely to still Job’s inward conflict, and bring him to a settled conviction that there is peace between his soul and God, which no outward and temporal troubles can destroy. This it effectually does. Job’s inward agitation ceases from this moment. He is no longer distracted by the sense of God’s hostility and wrath. His outward situation is unchanged, and the problem of his sufferings is as mysterious as ever; but he has attained to inward peace. He knows that his Redeemer liveth, and that after his worn and suffering body shall be resolved into dust the clouds shall break away which now obstruct his vision of the face of God. The lesson of immortality has accomplished its end. But in what relation, it may be further asked, does this passage stand to the doctrine of the Messiah and of a corporeal resurrection? Is Job’s Redeemer ours, and his faith the same in which the people of God now rejoice in the completed victory over death and the grave?

When Job appeals to his Redeemer, he does so without even remotely apprehending that He is the second person of the Godhead; for of the distinction of persons in the Diving Being, and of the doctrine of the Trinity as unfolded in the New Testament, he knew nothing. But he addresses Him in a character, and solicits the fulfilment of an office which distinctively belongs to God the Son. He is and has been in every age the Redeemer out of every distress, the Guardian and Protector of His people, and their Deliverer both from temporal distress and from that everlasting woe of which the former is the figure and the type. It is He to whom the saints of God are indebted for that joyful prospect of the vision of God beyond the grave, to which Job looked forward. So that the doctrine of Christ is here approached from its Divine side, not as the Son of Abraham, but as the Son of God. W. H. G.

Job here speaks out the conviction and the prophecy of a future retributive life; not of a bodily resuscitation from death, but of a *future beholding of God in a spiritual state*. His hope is the hope of immortality rather than of resurrection. But we need not break the bond which links this passage with the Christian truth of the Resurrection. We are not forbidden to read *back* to these passages in New Testament light and to make them expressions of New Testament truth. While there is no good reason for believing that Job in this sublime utterance saw what Paul did when he wrote 1 Cor. 15, we may still use these words to formulate our hope of the Resurrection. He who abolished death and brought immortality to light is in the grandest sense our Redeemer, our Goel, loosing for us the bonds of death, becoming our Surety with the God with whom He is one, thus fulfilling Job’s words that He will justify His own against Himself. This Redeemer *liveth, ever liveth* to make intercession for us. V.—God has given to us, for our faith to rest on, something more distinct and tangible than He gave to Job. There has been One on earth through whose lips God’s voice spoke, and from whose character was reflected the character of God. A living Person manifesting Deity. It is all this added meaning gained from Christ with which we use these words: “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” F. W. R.

They that live the spiritual life have it from the Son of God, and by believing in Him; He rises from the dead and lives forever; therefore they also live immortally. These are the short, clear steps in that evangelic argument. But no line of reasoning establishes the conclusion.

We are dealing not with the parts or conditions of a problem, but with a living fact and a personal reality. “*I am* the Resurrection and the Life ; whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die”—this carries us beyond the region of premise and inference. We believe, or not, and are blessed or wretched accordingly ; but we are not argued into the conviction, or out of it. The faith, however, in its certainty, amounts to sight or knowledge ; and hence it is no exaggeration when all Christendom, moving ever toward the grave in the procession of its generations, declares, “*I know* that my Redeemer liveth.” F. D. H.

Job doth not only profess faith in a Redeemer, but in *his* Redeemer—*my* Redeemer liveth. Every word in this confession is precious and weighty. Here he useth an appropriating word, yet he doth not engross the Redeemer to himself, excluding others, but he takes his part with others. Those pronouns, *mine*, *thine*, *his*, are words of love, and drop like honeycomb with sweetness of affection. The first work of faith is to believe that Christ is a Redeemer ; the second is to believe and rely upon Christ as a Redeemer ; the third is to see an interest in Christ as *my* Redeemer. *Caryl*.—Job uses the language of appropriation. He says, “*My* Redeemer.” And all that we know, or hear, or speak of Him will avail us but little, unless we are really and personally interested in Him as our Redeemer. A cold speculative knowledge of the Gospel, such as a lawyer has of a will or a deed, which he reads with no further design than to understand the tenor and import of the writing, will neither save nor comfort the soul. The believer reads it, as the will is read

by the heir, who finds his own name in it, and is warranted by it to call the estate and all the particulars specified his own. He appropriates the privileges to himself, and says, The promises are mine ; the pardon, the peace, the heaven of which I read, are all mine. This is the will and testament of the Redeemer, of my Redeemer. The great Testator remembered me in His will, which is confirmed and rendered valid by His death (Heb. 9 : 16), and therefore I humbly claim, and assuredly expect, the benefit of all that He has bequeathed. *Newton*, 1725–1807.

I know ; it is a matter of the greatest certainty to my soul, that there is a Redeemer for lost sinners ; I know He is my Redeemer ; I have seen my want of Him, and my certain destruction without His redemption. *He liveth* ; while He lives my hopes cannot die, my soul cannot despair ; stripped of all things beside, nothing can separate me from the love of Christ. I know that Christ liveth at the right hand of God, because He lives in my heart by faith. By the word of grace we know there is a Redeemer ; by the testimony of the Spirit of truth, through faith, the sinner is enabled to say He is *mine*, my beloved, my Friend. There are two infallible evidences of this : Christ has both our hearts and our hopes ; our heart is set upon Him ; our hopes centre in Him. He is precious to our *hearts* ; we have fellowship with Him by faith ; we know that He liveth, because we enjoy the comfort of His life and love in our souls ; we know Him both as dying for us and also as living in us ; He dwells in our hearts by faith ; He sends His tokens of love ; He draws our affections to Himself. *W. Mason*.

CHAPTER XX.

- 1 THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite,
and said,
- 2 Therefore do my thoughts give answer to me,
Even by reason of my haste that is in me.
- 3 I have heard the reproof which putteth me
to shame,
And the spirit of my understanding answer-
eth me.
- 4 Knowest thou *not* this of old time,
Since man was placed upon earth,
- 5 That the triumphing of the wicked is short,
And the joy of the godless but for a mo-
ment ?

- 6 Though his excellency mount up to the
heavens,
And his head reach unto the clouds ;
- 7 Yet he shall perish for ever like his own
dung :
They which have seen him shall say, Where
is he ?
- 8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not
be found :
Yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of
the night.
- 9 The eye which saw him shall see him no
more ;

- Neither shall his place any more behold him.
- 10 His children shall seek the favour of the poor,
And his hands shall give back his wealth.
- 11 His bones are full of his youth,
But it shall lie down with him in the dust.
- 12 Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth,
Though he hide it under his tongue ;
- 13 Though he spare it, and will not let it go,
But keep it still within his mouth ;
- 14 Yet his meat in his bowels is turned,
It is the gall of asps within him.
- 15 He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again :
God shall cast them out of his belly.
- 16 He shall suck the poison of asps :
The viper's tongue shall slay him.
- 17 He shall not look upon the rivers,
The flowing streams of honey and butter.
- 18 That which he laboured for shall he restore,
and shall not swallow it down ;
According to the substance that he hath gotten, he shall not rejoice.
- 19 For he hath oppressed and forsaken the poor ;
He hath violently taken away an house, and he shall not build it up.
- 20 Because he knew no quietness within him,
He shall not save aught of that wherein he delighteth.
- 21 There was nothing left that he devoured not ;
Therefore his prosperity shall not endure.
- 22 In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits :
The hand of every one that is in misery shall come upon him.
- 23 When he is about to fill his belly,
God shall cast the fierceness of his wrath upon him,
And shall rain it upon him while he is eating.
- 24 He shall flee from the iron weapon,
And the bow of brass shall strike him through.
- 25 He draweth it forth, and it cometh out of his body :
Yea, the glittering point cometh out of his gall ;
Terrors are upon him.
- 26 All darkness is laid up for his treasures :
A fire not blown *by man* shall devour him ;
It shall consume that which is left in his tent.
- 27 The heavens shall reveal his iniquity,
And the earth shall rise up against him.
- 28 The increase of his house shall depart,
His goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.
- 29 This is the portion of a wicked man from God,
And the heritage appointed unto him by God.

BILDAD (chap. 18) had enlarged upon the certainty of the sinner's downfall from the moral order in the world and the moral sense in men, which rose up against wickedness. Zophar's point is slightly different, it is the brevity of the wicked man's prosperity, which arises from the fact that wickedness brings about its own retribution. He illustrates this theme by drawing the picture of a rapacious, oppressive man of power suddenly brought to destruction and destitution in the midst of his days, with the hand of every one that is wretched against him, and forced to disgorge that which he had greedily swallowed. Job may understand that the fable is narrated of him. Zophar is too much of the "plain, blunt man ;" his meaning is so transparent that he commits himself and his friends into his adversary's hands. One general idea pervades the speech, the brevity of the wicked man's prosperity. A. B. D.

1-3. Zophar takes no notice of what Job had said to move their pity or to evidence his own integrity, but fastens upon the reproof he gave them in the close of his discourse, counts that a reproach, and thinks himself *therefore* obliged to answer, because Job had bidden them be afraid

of the sword, that he might not seem to be frightened by his menaces. H.

The entire speech of Zophar, after the introductory sentences (vs. 2, 3) is comprised briefly in vs. 4 and 5, and all that follows, to the end, are only illustrations and amplifications of the idea at first enunciated. The wicked shall perish miserably—he shall not be found among men, he shall be chased away as the shadows, and even any who may remember him shall not see him any more—his very name shall rot. The curse of his wickedness shall descend to his children, his youthful transgressions shall ripen their bitter fruits in his later life, and his cherished sins especially shall result in bitterness, disease, disaster, and remorse. The fruit of his iniquitous carefulness shall not remain except as a curse—it shall not cause him to rejoice. His oppressions and violence, though for awhile successful, shall not bring him quiet ; his greediness shall bring him only desolation, and those whom he has spoiled will pursue him with maledictions and vengeance. He shall be cursed in his eating, the sword shall pursue him, a fire not blown (by man) shall devour him ; the created universe shall be against him, and

all his substance shall "slip away," because God is against him. Such is the decree of the Almighty respecting the portion—the heritage—of the wicked man. The doctrine here taught is the same that is seen in all parts of the Bible ; but it is here presented with a terrible fulness and forcefulness of expression and an exuberant enumeration of details. *Curry.*

10. His children shall seek the favor of the poor. This is much stronger than if he had said, "they shall become poor." It is placing them below poverty itself. They shall court the good-will and assistance of the most destitute and abject. *Scott.*—God many times suffers an estate got by injustice or wrongdoing to prosper for a little while ; but there is a curse attends it, which descends upon the estate like an encumbrance. As, then, you would not transmit a curse to your children and devolve misery upon your family, free your estates from the burden and weight of what is other men's, lest by God's just judgment and secret providence that little which you injuriously detain from others carry away your whole estate to them and their family. God's providence many times makes abundant restitution when we will not. *Archbishop Tillotson.*

11. No truth more grows upon men, in the light of modern research, than the immutability of law. All its voices affirm together that "not a jot or tittle shall fail ;" that the "uttermost farthing" shall be required. "Transgression carries its penalty *in it*, as the acorn carries the oak," says a scientific skeptic ; unconsciously reiterating the thought of James, "Sin, when it is finished, *bringeth forth* death." The force once set in motion, and *unhindered*, goes on, as we are told, "unhasting, unresting," never wasting, never turning aside, never intermitting. The law works unflinchingly *outward*, carrying the contagion of plague or the breath of spring, alike to all. It works as stubbornly *inward*, transmuting act into habit, and pricking habit indelibly into the blood—and sinking it into the very marrow—so that literally, and not figuratively only, a man's "bones are full of the sins of his youth." *J. B. Thomas.*

12-14. The great force of a vicious habit is strongly marked in this and the following verses. The pleasure which a corrupt mind feels in the indulgence of its criminal inclination is compared to an epicure's high enjoyment of some delicious morsel. *Scott.*—When the pursuit of money grows to a monster passion of the soul, the mind dwindles, the affections wither, and sometimes even the nerve of hunger itself ceases to act, leaving the wretched miser to perish by

starvation fast by his heap of gold. So if a man lives for the table, the organs of the mouth and chin change their expression, the eye grows dull, the gait heavy, the voice takes a coarse animalized sound, and the higher qualities of intelligence he may once have manifested will be manifested nowhere, save as purveyors to the organs of taste and the gastric energy. *H. B.*

17. He shall be disappointed in his expectations, and shall not find that satisfaction in his worldly wealth which he vainly promised himself ; *he shall never see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter.* The world is not that to those who love and court it which they fancy it will be. The enjoyment sinks far below the raised expectation. *H.*—These figurative expressions undoubtedly represent some part of his punishment. Rivers, honey, and milk are Oriental emblems of felicity. It is possible that the utter loss of all his former abundance and enjoyments may be intended. But probably a worse punishment is here threatened ; even exclusion from "the seats of the blessed." The blessings of religion and the future happiness of good men are represented in Scripture by these pleasant images.

24. The word rendered "weapon" signifies arms or weapons of every sort, and is here put for the armed host of evils. God is at war with him. The Scripture arms the Divine Being with a sword, a bow and arrows to represent His vengeance. All his efforts to ward off the calamities which fall upon him will be ineffectual. The Arabian writers are very fond of the idea of a bow, and frequently use it to represent extraordinary, inevitable, and destructive calamities from the hand of God.

26. This is one of those terrible images by which the Scripture represents the future punishments of the wicked. It is unquenchable fire ; for it is not kindled by the breath of man, but of God. While he himself is suffering the wrath of God in another world vengeance pursues the family he left in this world to utter extermination.

28. The effect of the combined operations of the heavens and the earth against him is the swift and violent dissipation of his whole estate. *The increase of his house shall roll away, like torrents, in the day of His wrath.* *Scott.*

29. This is the portion of a wicked man from God. He will have it at last, as a child has his portion, and he will have it for a perpetuity, it is what he must abide by ; *this is the heritage of his decree from God* ; it is the settled rule of His judgment, and fair warning

is given of it. *O wicked man, thou shalt surely die!* (Ezek. 33 : 8.) II.—They chose to obey their own passions and lusts in the place of God, and He leaves them to the unrestrained tyranny of their evil tendencies. They would not live to Him, but lived to themselves cultivating selfishness in all its forms ; He assigns to them a condition in which selfishness reigns supreme in every being, where every evil bias of the human heart is allowed to bring forth its fruit without restraint in its bitterest intensity. What can be more awful than such a state of existence ? Every element of happiness has been excluded, and nothing is left but unsatisfied appetite wrought up to madness, envy, malice, rage, cruelty, implacable and unmerciful, all acting without control and each seeking nothing but

the misery of all. And more than this, every one is conscious that he is receiving nothing but the result of his own choice. *Wayland*.

We have here a most admirable account of great wicked men ; the only fault in Zophar was in misapplying it to Job ; as if God could not in justice afflict any but wicked men. *Bishop Wilson*.—Like all the speakers in this second round of debate, Zophar concludes by pointing with an impressive gesture to the picture he has drawn. Job should see himself there. He finishes by saying “ from God.” This forces Job into the arena ; he has no help, however unwilling he may be, but face this argument (21 : 27), and he shows that that which comes “ from God ” (21 : 22) is something very different. A. B. D.

CHAPTER XXI.

1 THEN Job answered and said,
2 Hear diligently my speech ;
And let this be your consolations.
3 Suffer me, and I also will speak ;
And after that I have spoken, mock on.
4 As for me, is my complaint to man ?
And why should I not be impatient ?
5 Mark me, and be astonished,
And lay your hand upon your mouth.
6 Even when I remember I am troubled,
And horror taketh hold on my flesh.
7 Wherefore do the wicked live,
Become old, yea, wax mighty in power ?
8 Their seed is established with them in their
sight,
And their offspring before their eyes.
9 Their houses are safe from fear,
Neither is the rod of God upon them.
10 Their bull gendereth, and faileth not ;
Their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf.
11 They send forth their little ones like a flock,
And their children dance.
12 They sing to the timbrel and harp,
And rejoice at the sound of the pipe.
13 They spend their days in prosperity,
And in a moment they go down to Sheol.
14 And they say unto God, Depart from us ;
For we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.
15 What is the Almighty, that we should serve
him ?
And what profit should we have, if we pray
unto him ?
16 Lo, their prosperity is not in their hand :

The counsel of the wicked is far from me.
17 How oft is it that the lamp of the wicked is
put out ?
That their calamity cometh upon them ?
That *God* distributeth sorrows in his anger ?
18 That they are as stubble before the wind,
And as chaff that the storm carrieth away ?
19 *Ye say*, God layeth up his iniquity for his
children.
Let him recompense it unto himself, that he
may know it.
20 Let his own eyes see his destruction,
And let him drink of the wrath of the
Almighty.
21 For what pleasure hath he in his house after
him,
When the number of his months is cut off ?
22 Shall any teach God knowledge ?
Seeing he judgeth those that are high.
23 One dieth in his full strength,
Being wholly at ease and quiet :
24 His breasts are full of milk,
And the marrow of his bones is moistened.
25 And another dieth in bitterness of soul
And never tasteth of good.
26 They lie down alike in the dust,
And the worm covereth them.
27 Behold, I know your thoughts,
And th devices which ye wrongfully im-
agine against me.
28 For ye say, Where is the house of the prince ?
And where is the tent wherein the wicked
dwelt ?

29 Have ye not asked them that go by the way ?
 And do ye not know their tokens ?
 30 That the evil man is reserved to the day of
 calamity ?
 That they are led forth to the day of wrath ?
 31 Who shall declare his way to his face ?
 And who shall repay him what he hath done ?
 32 Yet shall he be borne to the grave,

And men shall keep watch over the tomb.
 33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto
 him,
 And all men shall draw after him,
 As there were innumerable before him.
 34 How then comfort ye me in vain,
 Seeing in your answers there remaineth *only*
 falsehood ?

WE have traced the fierce and weary conflict to its final issue. We have watched him in his inward strife, in his piteous moans, his expostulations with God, his vain appeals to Him to declare Himself on his side. We have seen him driven to and fro in his tumultuous agitation, until, forced to the very edge of the precipice, and apparently about to fall hopelessly and helplessly into the awful chasm, he cleared it by one energetic act of faith, reaching forth into the unseen, and sustaining himself without any visible support. The personal question is now settled, and his intense inward agitation has subsided. He is in a much calmer and more tranquil state of mind. He has gained that unshaken conviction of the rectitude and goodness of God, which enables him to claim Him as his Redeemer in spite of all adverse appearances. This source of his disquiet is put to rest. The power of the temptation is broken. Satan cannot detach him from the service of God, seeing that he holds fast to his faith in Him, in spite of all the suggestions of sense and of reason. Job is safe from falling. But outward sense and human reason still present a problem which baffles him completely. He holds fast to his confidence in God, but he is bewildered nevertheless. The solution of his friends is no solution. According to their principles, indeed, there is no enigma in Providence. They see nothing but the evident and uniform reign of justice. Job shows, on the contrary, that this is not the case. He takes issue with them in regard to their fundamental principle, and exposes its falsity. It is not, as they allege, a fact of uniform experience that the righteous are rewarded and the wicked suffer. This is the point to which he addresses himself in his remaining speeches. W. H. G.

The three friends have all spoken in the same strain, portraying in violent and exaggerated terms the doom of the wicked ; but to their arguments Job has deigned no answer until now. The present speech, however, squarely traverses what they have said, and indicates that he has merely waited for what all had to urge, that he might answer all of them at once. Not in anger—the problem is too awful for that

—but in shuddering amazement Job portrays to his friends what indeed is palpable to every one who will be honest with himself and the world : the wicked prospering, becoming old, and dying in peace, apparently just as secure and just as favored as the righteous. J. F. G.

Instead of chiding his friends, he can only appeal to them to contemplate the awful riddle of Providence, at the thought of which he himself trembles (v. 6). This riddle, the prosperity of the wicked in God's hand (v. 16), their peaceful death (v. 13), and even the renown of their memory (v. 33), he then proceeds to unfold : First (vs. 2–6), some words of introduction, in which Job bids his friends be silent till he unfolds before them the mystery which weighs down his own soul and the thought of which makes him tremble—then they may mock if they have a mind. Second (vs. 7–34), the mystery itself, the prosperity of the wicked, in four turns :

Vs. 6–16. The wicked are prosperous, themselves, their children, their possessions, and they die in peace. This is an undeniable fact of experience. Vs. 16–21. On the other side, how often is it that they are seen overwhelmed by calamity ? There is no such invariable principle. They do not die sudden and violent deaths as the friends represented. Vs. 22–26. Why, then, should men—the friends—be wiser than God ? Why should they impose their petty principles on God's providence, and prescribe methods to Him which He does not follow ? Vs. 27–34. Finally Job turns to the insinuations of his friends—he knows the meaning of their indirect allusions, when they say, Where is the house of the prince (v. 28) ? but they only show their ignorance of the testimony of those who have travelled (v. 30), and their little sense of the unfathomableness of God's ways, and even if possible less sense of the ways of men, who have no such horror of the wicked as the friends pretend, but who press forward in their footsteps, admiring their prosperity and forgetting their wickedness (v. 34). A. B. D.

In language of unparalleled boldness Job maintains that the wicked live, grow old, keep their power, their children are established, they

and theirs live and die in prosperity, joyous, careless ; they renounce God openly, and with complete impunity, a common fate awaits all, there is no sign of the temporal retribution of which dogmatists speak so confidently. This speech virtually closes the second day's colloquy ; its import seems to have been misunderstood ; but what is the real object of the trials permitted by God but to demonstrate that goodness may exist, that a man thoroughly sincere, perfect, and righteous may hold fast his integrity though every shadow of hope connected with life be withdrawn ? Job feels and declares not only that his own "hedge" has been removed, and that every conceivable calamity has befallen him, destroying the spring of life, and leaving him apparently blasted by God's wrath, an object of loathing and scorn to the representations of humanity ; but also that the whole scheme of the world's history proves there is no general connection here between goodness and happiness ; men who renounce God prosper to the end, and then but share the fate of all mankind ; all lie down alike in the dust and the worms cover them. Thus also with regard to the fear and love of God ; though quite convinced that it will bring no recompense, he abjures the "counsels of the wicked" (v. 16), and so proves that his innermost convictions are steadfast.

5, 6. A very important and necessary introduction to the following statements. Job is quite aware of the horror and indignation which they must excite ; none feels this more deeply than he. He trembles, is terrified at the contemplation of apparent injustice in God's dealing with his creatures. *Cook.*—The friends have so revelled in their highly colored descriptions that they have almost exulted over the fate of the wicked ; Job, on the other hand, full of sympathy with right and truth, must view with amazement the confused order of things ; it is not what he wishes to see. J. F. G.

It is deeply interesting to observe, not merely that the difficulties concerning Providence felt by Job refer to the very subjects which painfully perplex the modern mind, but also that the friends of Job exhibit the instinctive tendency which is observed in modern times to denounce his doubt as sin, not less than to attribute his trials to evil as their direct cause. *Farrar.*

7. In every age, perhaps we might even say in every Christian experience, there are junctures in which it is difficult to reconcile the dispensations of Providence with the goodness of God. The controversy began in the patriarchal days, and is the grand argument of the Book of

Job. "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?" The seventy-third Psalm is occupied with the clearing of the same paradox. Jeremiah, pre-eminently a sorrowful man, breaks forth thus : "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee, yet let me reason the case with Thee of Thy judgments : Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jer. 12 : 1.) The worst men are sometimes apparently happy, and the consequence is that the believer is envious at the foolish. Enemies of God appear to him to succeed in every undertaking. Wealth flows in on them ; they arrogate to themselves an exemption from all reverses, and feel insured even against Providence ; they fill the public eye, they build and decorate, they gather about them the gay and the revelling, they leave wealth to their children. J. W. A.

Still life goes on with the worldly soul, deepening and widening in its flow, and holding in itself manifold and still multiplying elements of interest. Increasingly the man is caught and held by these—like a ship from which many anchors are being cast into the sea. He strives among the struggling, rejoices with the gay, feels the spur of honor, enters the race of acquisition, does some hard and many kindly things by turns, multiplies his engagements, his relationships, his friends, and then—just when after such preparations, life ought to be fully beginning, and opening itself out into a great restful, sunny plain—lo ! the shadows begin to fall, which tell, too surely, that it is drawing fast to a close. But he is not ready. He has thrown out so many anchors, and they have taken such a fast hold of the ground that it will be no slight matter to raise them. He is *settled*. He has no pilgrim's staff at hand ; and his eye, familiar enough with surrounding things, is not accustomed to the onward and ascending way, cannot so well measure the mountain altitude, or reckon the far distance. The progress of time has been much swifter than the progress of his thought. Alas ! he has made one long mistake. He has "looked at the things which are seen," and forgotten the things which are not seen. And "the things which are seen are temporal," and go with time into extinction ; while "those which are not seen are eternal." And so there is hurry, and confusion, and distress in the last hours, and in the going away. *Raleigh.*

8-12. Of course Job does not mean to say that they have all this material welfare *because* they are wicked ; that is not the issue. His point, made against the whole tenor of the

friends' arguments, is simply that, being wicked, they are not treated according to their wickedness. J. F. G.

14, 15. Their prosperity continues to the very last. Experiencing no reverses and no unusual calamity, with no check upon their good fortune, and no term of suffering that could be regarded as a penalty for their misdeeds, they go down peacefully and quietly to the grave. Their life is filled up with pleasure and with every form of earthly good to its very close. And the natural consequence follows. In their arrogant and impious presumption they refuse all subjection to the Most High. W. H. G.—These men live and die in practical atheism—are simply secularists; they do with impunity, in their day of enjoyment, just what Satan had affirmed Job would do in hopelessness—they “renounce God.” The threefold rejection should be noted—they care not to *know* His ways, nor to *serve* Him, nor to be in *communion* with Him. Cook.

Unbelief is human nature shutting closely her eyes lest she should perceive and love; human nature making her ears heavy lest she should hear and be saved. Man, ruined, wretched, complaining, dying man, is haughty and unbending, still clinging to his own miseries, aggravating his own sufferings, provoking the doom which he sincerely dreads, and refusing to “come to Christ, that he might have life.” Heaven urges by all its joys, and hell by all its terrors; the cross of Christ pleads by all its wonders of justice and of grace, and unbelief replies to every commandment, “We will not have this man to reign over us;” and to every gracious overture, “Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.” E. M.—What condition of a human soul can be thought of more unnatural or more destructive than to live perpetually in panic with respect to its Creator, its Portion, its Saviour, than to hate the thought of the Greatest, Best, and Loveliest! What more hopeless than to shrink with horror from the countenance that is always turned on us, and be impatient of the searching eye which we can never escape! This is what impenitent men are preparing for themselves in greater measure than they have yet experienced. Even now they sometimes shake with terror, or avoid it only by a violent force put upon the thoughts; but the great mystery of fear is yet to be revealed to them. J. W. A.—The Eternal departs from them. By this is meant not that the Almighty withdraws from man His life-sustaining energy, or forgoes any of His claims to human love and homage. No, He will keep the

human spirit in existence and bind it by the laws of moral obligation to His throne forever. But it means a discontinuance of the overtures of His love, and His agencies to restore; it is leaving man to himself, to reap the labour of his own hands. The first stage is probation; the second stage is retribution. In the first stage man says to God, “Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways;” in the second stage God says to man, “Depart from Me.” In the first stage all is Divine mercy; in the second stage all is justice. Anon.

15. What profit if we pray unto Him? Any unperverted mind will conceive of the scriptural idea of prayer, as that of one of the most downright, sturdy realities in the universe. Right in the heart of God’s plan of government it is lodged as a power. Amid the conflicts which are going on in the evolution of that plan it stands as a power. Into all the intricacies of Divine working and the mysteries of Divine decree, it reaches out silently as a power. In the mind of God, we may be assured, the conception of prayer is no fiction, whatever man may think of it. It has, and God has *determined* that it should have, a positive and an appreciable influence in directing the course of a human life. It is, and God has *purposed* that it should be, a link of connection between human mind and Divine mind, by which, through His infinite condescension, we may actually move His will. It is, and God has *decreed* that it should be, a *power* in the universe, as distinct, as real, as natural, and as uniform as the power of gravitation, or of light, or of electricity. A man may *use* it as trustingly and as soberly as he would use either of these. This intense practicalness characterizes the scriptural ideal of prayer. The Scriptures make it a reality, and not a revery. They never bury it in the notion of a poetic or philosophic contemplation of God. They do not merge it in the mental fiction of prayer by action in any other or all other duties of life. They have not concealed the fact of prayer beneath the mystery of prayer. The scriptural utterances on the subject of prayer admit of no such reduction of tone and confusion of sense as men often put forth in imitating them. Up on the level of inspired thought *prayer is* PRAYER—a distinct, unique, elemental power. A. Phelps.

Every man who believes in matter and force and natural law must logically believe in the possibility of miracle and the efficacy of prayer, provided that there is an architect of the universe, and that we can obtain access to him. Bible miracles do not involve the suspension of

natural laws, but only arrangements under these laws, or the operation of unknown laws ; which, however, may be as inexplicable to us as if they were contraventions of law. Prayer, in the scriptural sense of it, is an appeal to One whose knowledge of and power over His own works are capable of effecting results to us not only impossible, but inconceivable. In maintaining the possibility of miracle and the power of prayer, along with the unchangeable law of God, the Bible is thus on higher scientific ground than that of any of those who call these in question. *Dawson.*

Among all the moral instincts of man there is no one more natural, more universal, more unconquerable than prayer. Among all peoples, renowned or obscure, civilized or savage, one meets with acts and set forms of invocation. Wherever man lives, under certain circumstances, at certain hours, under the dominion of certain impressions of the soul, his eyes raise themselves, his hands seek each other, his knees bow, to petition or to give thanks, to adore or to deprecate. With joy or with fear, openly or in the secrecy of his heart, it is to prayer that man betakes himself, in the last resort, to fill up the void of his soul, or to bear the burdens of his destiny. It is in prayer that he seeks, when all is failing him, support for his weakness, comfort in his afflictions, encouragement for his virtue. *Guizot.*—Grant God and man (God's yet unfallen creature) standing in His presence, conscious of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, and of his own dependence upon Him, and prayer is an intuitive idea. It remains intuitive when man stands before God as a fallen creature, conscious how far he has gone from original righteousness, though it requires reassuring under his thus altered moral circumstances. It remains intuitive, though it requires redirecting, when man has slighted the one true God, and addressed himself to other objects of worship, whether instead of Him or beside Him. It remains intuitive, though, when the fulness of time was come, Christ was plainly set forth as the medium through whom it is to be offered, and the Holy Spirit was made known as co-operating with the human spirit in its utterance. By such revelations it is sublimed, indeed, and purified, but it is not thereby rendered less an intuitive effort on the part of man. These several and successive interworkings gave prayer a larger scope, or reassured or extended it, or recalled it from abnormal movement, or rescued it from utter perversion, or showed man the most appropriate channel through which it should pass, and the most effectual aid by which

his own effort might be sustained. They did not originate it. Man found the faculty or tendency toward it within him, and practised it from the beginning. *Hessey.*

Prayer is a Divine institution for human training on the side of character, and is related to Divine providence, not to natural causes. That Providence is ordered with entire reference to the education of the human race in love, faith, humility, reverence, and obedience, and is made to hinge largely on prayer, or the application of individuals and communities to God for aid. The idea is not that prayer enlightens God as to the fact, or as to the supply of human wants ; or that it persuades Him to change His mind at man's entreaty ; but prayer is a wise condition for God to annex to benefits which He is already inclined to bestow, in order that when given they may be attended with the best results. For spiritual ends it is often better that a thing should not be given, than that it should be given to a state of mind different from that which is secured by prayer, and by prayer alone. For God's great object is to draw the soul as much as possible into a felt connection with Himself in all things ; that by a perpetual faith it may consciously live and rejoice in Him. *W. W. Patton.* Because life is so subtle an intermixture of dependence and action, prayer is the most practical of all forms of work ; it is at once the activity of man's freedom and the expression of his dependence ; and the answer which it wins is not less, in one sense, the result of human effort than in another it is the work of God. And thus it is in and by prayer that the two governing elements of religious life, thought, and work alike find their strongest impulse and their point of unity. Such is our weakness that we are either absorbingly speculative and contemplative on the one hand, or we are absorbingly practical and men of action on the other. Either exaggeration is fatal to the true life of religion, which binds the soul to God by faith as well as by love ; by love not less than by faith ; by a life of energetic service not less truly than by a life of communion with light and truth. It is in prayer that each element is at once quickened in itself and balanced by the presence of the other. It is prayer which prevents religion from degenerating into mere religious thought on the one side or into mere philanthropy on the other. Thus it is that prayer is of such vital importance to the well-being of the soul. It is indispensable, alike for workers and students, for the educated and unlettered. For we all have to seek God's face above ; we all have souls to be sanctified and saved ; we all have sins and

passions to beat back and conquer. And these things are achieved pre-eminently by prayer. H. P. L.

Though it be not in the same thing that we desire, yet when the Lord changes our petitions in His answers, it is always for the better; He regards our *well* more than our *will*. We beg deliverance; we are not unanswered if He give patience and support. L.—God may answer prayer in what seems to us its denial. We pray for the process, and He gives us the result. A man prays to be delivered from trouble, God sends the trouble, but sends also courage of heart and calmness of mind. Is not the intent of the prayer more completely met than if the form of it had been granted? So God answers our prayers often, not by giving the thing we ask, but by leading us to the end we seek. We cannot doubt that He careth for us. But He may relieve us by removing the occasion of our cares or by so increasing our courage and faith that they shall be no longer a care to us. He may lift our burden from us or so strengthen us under them that they shall no longer be a burden. R. Cordley.

16. Having drawn in such attractive colors the prosperity of the wicked, a prosperity given from the hand of God, Job, even in the midst of his own misery, which is also from God, cannot refrain from repudiating their principles—far be from me the counsel of the wicked. A. B. D.—After quoting the words of the ungodly, Job feels himself compelled, by his deepest personal revulsion, to declare his own inmost abhorrence of them—how he himself is wholly unable to believe that they thus really possess their best wealth, and how he does not in the least justify (or sympathize with) such language. Ewald.

17, 18. Job challenges his opponents to prove their assertions. How often, he asks, does it happen, as you say, that the torch of the wicked is put out? that calamity comes upon them? that God apportions sorrows (or snares) to them? that they are as straw before the wind, as chaff which the storm takes suddenly away? Cook.—How often is it that the wicked are made like stubble? You say that God deals with men exactly according to their characters, and that the wicked are certainly subjected to calamities; but how often does this, in fact, occur? Do they not live in prosperity, and arrive at a good old age? Barnes.

19-21. The first clause states the dogma: God, you say, reserves His guilt—*i.e.*, its punishment for His children; nay, Job answers, let God requite the man himself, and he shall know

it; his own eyes would then see his ruin; he would, as he deserves, drink himself the wrath of the Almighty. If the number of his own months be completed—*i.e.*, if he has lived out his allotted time—what cares he about the prosperity of his house after him? Throughout the preceding statement the references to the arguments of Job's friends are clear and unmistakable. Cook.

21. *What careth he?* It is from the depth of Job's unselfish love that the foregoing demand comes; for he sees that in the cold selfishness of the wicked, punishment reserved for posterity does not touch his soul at all—it does not punish sin of that kind. J. F. G.

22-26. By insisting on a doctrine of Providence which did not correspond to God's providence as actually seen in facts, Job's friends were making themselves wiser than God and becoming His teachers—Will any teach knowledge unto God? Shall we insist on His method of government being what it plainly is not? This is what it is: One man dieth in his full prosperity—wholly at ease and quiet. Another man dieth in the bitterness of his soul and has not tasted pleasure. They lie down alike in the dust and the worm covers them. Their different fortune is not determined by their different character. The one is not good and the other wicked. But God distributes to them as He chooses. A. B. D.

27. Your thoughts. All the speakers had insinuated Job's guilt; none as yet had openly charged him with crimes committed before his ruin; but he felt every blow, and understood the exact bearing of every remark. Cook.

27-34. He reproaches them for identifying the fall of his house and estate, who was a prince among them, with the retribution due to an oppressor or a tyrant. He rebukes the misinterpretation, and gives the true solution of it, that there is a day of wrath and judgment coming—a pretty clear intimation of his faith in a future state. Before that day comes there may not be power in any man here to inflict or declare a just sentence on him who prospers in an evil way; we do not even see the punishment of such in their death, for the quietness of the grave also is alike to all; your argument, therefore, against me is vain, and if intended for comfort through the hope that if righteous I shall be still happy in this world, it is based on a principle which, as false, ought to be rejected. T. C.

29. Those “that go by the way” were undoubtedly travellers, particularly such as came

from distant journeys in caravans, a mode of travel which is shown by chap. 6 : 19 to have existed in the time of Job. In the paucity of written knowledge, as well as of epistolary communications between distant parts, they were the chief sources of information respecting the circumstances of foreign countries. The idea of Job clearly is that the friends could resort to the testimony of travellers as to what they had observed of God's dealings with men, and what they had heard of the sayings of the wise in other lands. As to the "tokens," the reference appears to be to the memorials of persons and events which they had seen in their travels. *Kitto*.

30. As he had before stated his own hope of a gracious sentence from his Redeemer, so now he closes and completes his masterly argument with a declaration that the wicked who prosper in this life, and leave their proud monuments behind them, shall receive a dreadful recompense in the future day of judgment. *Peters*.

Day of wrath. Wrath and threatening are invariably mingled with the love ; and in the utmost solitudes of nature the existence of hell seems to me as legibly declared by a thousand spiritual utterances as that of heaven. It is well for us to dwell with thankfulness on the unfolding of the flower, and the falling of the dew, and the sleep of the green fields in the sunshine ; but the blasted trunk, the barren rock, the moaning of the bleak winds, the roar of the black, perilous whirlpools of the mountain streams, the solemn solitudes of moors and seas, the continual fading of all beauty into darkness, and of all strength into dust—have these no language for us ? The good succeeds to the evil as day succeeds the night, but so also the evil to the good. Gerizim and Ebal, birth and death, light and darkness, heaven and hell, divide the existence of man and his futurity. *Ruskin*.—One dark world is to career forever. No sun is ever to arise upon its night. Its people few, compared with the infinite numbers of the universe, they are never to increase or decrease while God endures. They are imprisoned for life—the life of eternity. *Reid*.

31. The evil-doer stands unreprieved because of his prosperity—there is none to *repay him what he hath done* ; he goes to his grave unscathed, and even there his prosperous career continues to watch over him ; the very earth that covers him is, by a strong figure, rendered conscious of the preciousness of its trust, and his influence lives after him. *Curry*.—So great

is his power that no one ventures to rebuke his injustice, or is able to punish it. *Conant*.

32, 33. The wicked man came to an honored grave, and the clods of the valley lay softly on him ; and his example, so far from being shunned, was followed by the mass of men, as there were multitudes that preceded him in the way he walked. A. B. D.—The rich man lives luxuriously, dies without any mark of judgment, is buried honorably, and leaves his substance to his family. What men saw and knew of him was just what Job and his opponents knew of the wicked ; the after awakening was unrevealed. Job sees all this ; but it neither leads him to give up the cause of goodness, nor tempts him to turn away from God.

34. Falsehood. Stripped of all artifices, reduced to the ultimate principle, there remains nothing but deceit, a false pretence of honor to God, and real treachery to your friend. Thus ends the second colloquy. *Cook*.

Job has hitherto answered the accusation of the friends, which they express in ever-increasingly terrible representations of the end of the godless, presenting only the terrible side of their dogma of the justice of God, with a steadfast attestation of his innocence, and with the ever-increasing hope of Divine vindication against human accusation. In him was manifested that faith which, being thrust back by men, clings to God, and thrust back by God Himself, soars aloft from the present wrath of God to His faithfulness and mercy. The friends, however, instead of learning in Job's spiritual condition to distinguish between the appearance and the reality in this confidence which comes back to itself, see in it only a constant wilful hardening of himself against their exhortations to penitence. It does not confound them that he over whom, according to their firm opinion, the sword of God's vengeance hangs, warns them of that same sword, but only confirms them still more in their conviction that they have to do with one who is grievously self-deluded. *Delitzsch*.

True consolation could be founded only on correct views of the government and dealings of God ; but such views Job says they had not. With their conceptions of the Divine administration they could not administer to him any real consolation. *Truth* alone sustains the soul in affliction ; *truth* only can inspire confidence in God ; *truth* only can break the force of sorrow, and enable the sufferer to look up to God and to heaven with confidence and joy. *Barnes*.

CHAPTER XXII.

- 1 THEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,
 2 Can a man be profitable unto God ?
 Surely he that is wise is profitable unto himself.
 3 Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous ?
 Or is it gain *to him*, that thou makest thy ways perfect ?
 4 Is it for thy fear *of him* that he reproveth thee,
 That he entereth with thee into judgment ?
 5 Is not thy wickedness great ?
 Neither is there any end to thine iniquities.
 6 For thou hast taken pledges of thy brother for nought,
 And stripped the naked of their clothing.
 7 Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink,
 And thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.
 8 But as for the mighty man, he had the earth ;
 And the honourable man, he dwelt in it.
 9 Thou hast sent widows away empty,
 And the arms of the fatherless have been broken.
 10 Therefore snares are round about thee,
 And sudden fear troubleth thee,
 11 Or darkness, that thou canst not see,
 And abundance of waters cover thee.
 12 Is not God in the height of heaven ?
 And behold the height of the stars, how high they are !
 13 And thou sayest, What doth God know ?
 Can he judge through the thick darkness ?
 14 Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not ;
 And he walketh on the vault of heaven.
 15 Wilt thou keep the old way
 Which wicked men have trodden ?
 16 Who were snatched away before their time,

- Whose foundation was poured out as a stream :
 17 Who said unto God, Depart from us ;
 And, What can the Almighty do for us ?
 18 Yet he filled their houses with good things :
 But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.
 19 The righteous see it, and are glad ;
 And the innocent laugh them to scorn
 20 *Saying*, Surely they that did rise up against us are cut off,
 And the remnant of them the fire hath consumed.
 21 Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace :
 Thereby good shall come unto thee.
 22 Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth,
 And lay up his words in thine heart.
 23 If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up ;
 If thou put away unrighteousness far from thy tents.
 24 And lay thou *thy* treasure in the dust,
 And *the gold of* Ophir among the stones of the brooks ;
 25 And the Almighty shall be thy treasure,
 And precious silver unto thee.
 26 For then shalt thou delight thyself in the Almighty,
 And shalt lift up thy face unto God.
 27 Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee ;
 And thou shalt pay thy vows.
 28 Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee ;
 And light shall shine upon thy ways.
 29 When they cast *thee* down, thou shalt say,
There is lifting up ;
 And the humble person he shall save.
 30 He shall deliver *even* him that is not innocent :
 Yea, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of thine hands.

CHAPS. XXII.—XXXI. THE THIRD CIRCLE OF SPEECHES.

IN the first round of speeches the three friends exhausted the argument from the general conception of God. In the second they exhausted the argument from the operation of His providence in the world, as observed in the fate of the wicked. To the last Job had replied by a direct contradiction, adducing facts and testimony in proof that the fate of the wicked man

in God's providence was in no way so uniformly miserable as the three friends had represented (chap. 21). There is, manifestly, now left but one weapon in the hands of the three friends—namely, to express openly what they had hinted at formerly in a veiled manner, and charge Job directly with great sins. This charge is made by Eliphaz in the opening speech of the third round of debate. A. B. D.—In the third cycle of debate the comforters are turned into

headlong accusers. Eliphaz expresses great truths with wonderful force of language ; but truths inadequate, in their application to the case of Job, to explain his suffering. Words the most sound and holy lose their value and become impertinent and injurious, when they are uttered at the wrong time, or in a wrong spirit, or with a wrong direction. D. F.

Chap. 22. It is not the general sinfulness of human nature which Eliphaz adduces against him as in his first discourse. Nor does he merely allege the language of impiety and irreverence to be found in Job's speeches, as in his second discourse. But he makes open and direct charges of habitual and gross transgression. What a spectacle is this ! and what a lesson it reads to us ! This man is one whom God declared to be without his equal for piety in the earth—perfect and upright, and one that feared God and turned away from evil. And yet here are good and wise men, men of age and experience, his friends through many former years, knowing him not merely by reputation but by personal, familiar, and long acquaintance, who do not scruple to cherish the grossest and most unjust suspicions, and actually to charge upon him the most egregious misconduct. And all this they do without the slightest foundation in actual fact. We say again, What a spectacle ! and what a lesson it reads to us ! W. H. G.

2-10. The cause of God's afflicting a man is not to be sought for in God Himself, as if it arose out of any self-seeking on His part, or any respect He had to Himself, for a man's righteousness is no profit to God, neither is his wickedness any loss to Him. The reason of God's treatment of men is therefore to be sought in themselves. But it is inconceivable that He should chastise a man for his piety. It must therefore be for his sins (vs. 2-5). Having by means of this syllogism confirmed his conviction of Job's guiltiness, Eliphaz proceeds to suggest what sins Job must have committed, which are those that a powerful, irresponsible, rich ruler of his time might most naturally be guilty of (vs. 6-10). A. B. D.

2-5. If God sends punishments (so Eliphaz argues), man must have deserved them ; God does not punish on His own account, still less on account of man's piety, but on account of man's sin, and thus for the profit of man himself. Now, Job's sufferings are such punishments ; therefore he must have grievously sinned. This series of inferences is pointed, connected, and in itself clear. But at last comes unobserved a tremendous fallacy, that sufferings are, as such, punishments. If one

starts with this principle he is landed in the alternative that sufferings are sent on account of piety (which is impious to suppose) or on account of the sins of the sufferer. *Encald.*

2. Can a man be profitable unto God. These words, under an interrogation couching a positive assertion, are a declaration of the impossibility of man's being profitable to God, or (which is all one) of his meriting of God, according to the proper and strict sense of merit, which implies man's claim or title to receive as much good from God as he had done for God. But all that any man is capable of doing is but an indispensable homage to God, and not a free oblation. That, however, which excites endeavor and sets obedience on work is not properly a belief or persuasion of the merit of our works, but the assurance of our reward. And can we have a greater assurance of this, than that Truth itself, which cannot break its word, has promised it ? For the Most High and Holy One (as we may with reverence speak) has pledged His word, His name, and His honor to reward the steadfast, finally persevering obedience of every one within the covenant of grace, notwithstanding its legal imperfection. And, therefore, though we have all the reason in the world to blush at the worthless emptiness of our best duties, and to be ashamed of the poorness and shortness of our most complete actions, and, in a word, to think as meanly of them and of ourselves for them as God Himself does ; yet still let us build both our practice and our comfort upon this one conclusion "as upon a rock," that though after we have done all we are still unprofitable servants, yet because we have done all God has engaged Himself to be a gracious Master. *South.*

5. Here, for the first time, Eliphaz distinctly charges Job with guilt, the exact nature of which he infers from the special punishment. The wickedness must have been great, the iniquities infinite, which called for such penalties. *Cook.*

5-9. These specific charges are of course wholly theoretic, nor are they inaptly made. They name such things as might be done by a busy rich man like Job, through forgetfulness or indifference, or such things as may have been done in his name by servants. Any of them might take place at the gate of a prince without his knowledge. The expression, "man of the strong arm" (v. 8), by which Eliphaz characterizes such as Job, shows how he accounts for such sin ; the man whose strength and wealth and whose absorption with his favored friends make him indifferent to needs and distress because removed from them. J. F. G.

He charges him with oppression and injustice ; that when he was in prosperity he not only did no good with his wealth and power, but did a great deal of hurt with it. This was utterly false, as appears by the account Job gives of himself (29 : 12, etc.), and the character God gave of him. And yet Eliphaz branches out this charge into divers particulars, with as much assurance as if he could call witnesses to prove upon oath every article of it. For aught I know, Eliphaz, in accusing Job falsely, was guilty of as great a sin and as great a wrong to Job as the Sabeans and Chaldeans that robbed him ; for a man's good name is more precious and valuable than his wealth. It is against all the laws of justice, charity, and friendship, either to raise or receive calumnies, jealousies and evil surmises concerning others ; and it is the more base and disingenuous if we thus vex those that are in distress and add to their affliction. Eliphaz could produce no instances of Job's guilt in any of the particulars that follow here, but seems resolved to calumniate boldly and throw all the reproach he could on Job, not doubting but that some would cleave to him. H.

9. Widows . . . fatherless. For Job's answer see chaps. 29 : 12, 13 and 31 : 16, 18. No charge could affect him more deeply, and he dwells upon it with unusual fulness in his two answers. *Cook.*

10, 11. On account of this inhuman mode of action, by which he has challenged the punishment of justice, "snares are round about" him, destruction encompasses him on every side, so that he sees no way out, and must, without any escape, succumb to it. And the approaching ruin makes itself known to him, time after time, by terrors which come suddenly upon him and disconcert him ; so that his outward circumstances being deranged, and his mind discomposed, he has already in anticipation to taste that which is before him. *Delitzsch.*

12-20. Eliphaz, having suggested what Job's offences must have been, now suggests under what feeling in regard to God he must have committed them. He thought God so far removed from the world that He did not observe men's conduct. A. B. D.

12, 13. The Book of Job is full of these thoughts : "Can a man be profitable to God ? is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous ?" "Is not God in the height of heaven ? and behold the height of the stars—how high they are ! And thou sayest, 'Can God know ?' 'Can He judge through the dark cloud ?' " Yct, as these old Hebrews believed, as we know, to whom the Gospel has come,

even better than they, God *is* mindful of man. He *does* think of us. He never ceases to care for us. Even the host of stars—whatever grander office they fulfil in the universe—are made at the same time to be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and for years, and to be lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth. Whatever nobler purposes they may accomplish for *this* use, also, they were adapted by the Creator. And no one can gaze on the form and aspect of the heavens, on the perfect symmetry of that vaulted dome, in the splendor of noonday, or when pale fires are kindling in myriads upon the darkening surface of the evening sky—no one can behold this ineffable grandeur and beauty, and doubt that here is an *arrangement* to give joy to man. By whatever optical laws the effect is produced, for whatever ends infinitely higher than the convenience and delight of man the heavens were made, this *arrangement* is plain. The *intention* of the Creator to elevate and gratify the human mind by spreading over us the sun-lit and star-lit sky is undeniable. *One* motive, therefore, in the structure of the material universe was the good of man. Out of all the worlds He has erected a roof over man's destiny. At the moment when we are awed by the revelation of His greatness we are touched by the disclosures of His condescension. *G. P. Fisher.*

21-30. Eliphaz exhorts Job to reconcile himself with God, assuring him of restoration and great felicity if he will do so. A. B. D.—*Reconcile.* This word, presupposing guilt and sin on Job's part, is what invalidates the whole force of this beautiful passage, which is the final appeal of the friends to Job. Abstractly there is nothing whatever to be urged against the lines ; but in implication, and as here applied, they gather into themselves all the charges that Eliphaz has made. J. F. G.

The passage consists of two parts : first, a series of exhortations, each of which is accompanied by a promise (vs. 21-25), and second, a series of great promises simply (vs. 26-30). The exhortations are : that Job should reconcile himself with God and receive His words into his heart—thus should he be at peace, and good would come to him (vs. 21-22) ; that he should put away his evil—then should he be restored (v. 23) ; that he should set his heart no more on earthly treasure, but fling it to the dust and among the pebbles of the brooks—then should the Almighty be his treasure (vs. 24, 25). The promises are : that, delighting himself in the Almighty, he would be able to lift up his face to God in confidence, unashamed by afflictions.

(v. 26); he would pray unto God with the assurance of being heard, and the vows which he made to God when presenting his request he would have cause to pay, his request being fulfilled (v. 27); his purposes in regard to the future would stand and be realized, for the light of God would be on his ways (v. 28); any casting down that might happen to him would speedily be turned by God into upraising, because of his meekness and humility (v. 29); and finally, even those who had incurred guilt would be saved through his availing prayer (v. 30).

A. B. D.—These exhortations and promises are, in and of themselves, true and most glorious. There is also somewhat in them which reflects shame on Job; they direct him to that inward peace, to that joy in God which he had entirely lost sight of when he spoke of the misfortune of the righteous in contrast with the prosperity of the wicked. But even these beautiful words of promise are blemished by the false assumption from which they proceed. The promise, the Almighty shall become Job's precious ore [instead of gold or silver, or his lost wealth], rests on the assumption that Job is now suffering the punishment of his avarice, and has as its antecedent, "Lay thine ore in the dust and thine Ophir beneath the pebbles of the brook." Thus do even the holiest words lose their value when they are not uttered at the right time, and the most brilliant sermon that exhorts to penitence remains without effect when it is prompted by pharisaic uncharitableness. D.

21. Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace. Our daily holy walking is a daily acquainting ourselves with God; every step of a holy life is both toward and with God. *Caryl*.—The life of true religion is a heart knowledge of God; such a thorough appreciation of the excellence and beauty of His character as really contents and satisfies the soul, even when earthly sources of happiness fail. In the knowledge of God, in the appreciation of God, in the enjoyment of God, in communion with God, but in nothing short of this man can find rest. E. M. G.—All holiness is so connected with this *growing knowledge* of God, that there can be *none without it*. All happiness, all enjoyment of spiritual privileges, hangs upon it. "This is *life eternal*, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Would you have "*grace and peace multiplied unto you?*" it must be in the same way—"through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." "Then shall you know, if you follow on to know the

Lord." The smallest degree of this blessed knowledge attained will assuredly kindle in you an ardent desire for more. Every step you take in it is a step nearer heaven; a wading deeper into that ocean of bliss without a bottom or a shore—God, *your God*, in Christ. *Goode*.

The knowledge of God is gained, as the knowledge of man is gained, by living much with Him. Seek not so much to pray as to live in an *atmosphere* of prayer, lifting up your heart momentarily to Him in varied expressions of devotion as the various occasions of life may prompt, adoring Him, thanking Him, resigning your will to Him many times a day, and more or less all day; and you shall thus, as you advance in this practice, as it becomes more and more habitual to you, increase in that knowledge of God which fully contents and satisfies the soul. So, also, the knowledge of God may be obtained from studying His mind as given us in the Holy Scriptures. It is through His Word that God speaks to us, as it is through prayer that we speak to God; for which reason he who would cultivate acquaintance with God must cultivate a taste for the Holy Scriptures, not merely a literary antiquarian taste (though as a mere piece of ancient literature the Bible is the most wonderful book in the world), but a devotional taste. There is a study of Scripture which is analogous to ejaculatory prayer; a study which inweaves the Word into the daily life of the Christian; a rumination which can be carried on without book, and which is more or less continual.

Again, the discipline of life will very much contribute, under God's blessing, toward the knowledge of God. When God's people desire to have Him in their hearts He advances into the centre of their life. He trains them by what is called their fortunes, by reverses, by tears, by trials, by manifold temptations, by touching them in their sensitive part, sometimes by a sunshine of prosperity, which makes their heart expand in gratitude to Him. Those, then, who desire to have a practical and experimental, as distinct from a speculative knowledge of Him, will study Him in these His dealings; they will try to discern the lesson of every part of their own experience, if haply it may teach them something of Him with whom they have to do, and will thus have His wisdom, power, and love impressed upon them in a way in which nothing short of experience can impress. E. M. G.

Christ is truth for the understanding, authority for the will, love for the heart, certainty for the hope, fruition for all the desires, and for

the conscience at once cleansing and law. Fellowship with Him is no indolent passiveness, nor the luxurious exercise of certain emotions, but the contact of the whole nature with its sole adequate object and rightful Lord. A. M.

Draw nearer, O my soul, to the Lord of love, and be not seldom and slight in thy contemplation of His love and loveliness. Dwell in the sunshine, and thou wilt know that it is light and warm and comfortable. Distance and strangeness cherish thy doubts. "Acquaint thyself with Him and be at peace." Look up, often and earnestly look up, after thy ascended glorified head. Think where, and what He is, and what He is now doing for all His own, and how once abased, suffering love is now triumphant, reigning, glorified love; and therefore not less now than in all its tender expressions on earth. *Barter*.

And be at peace. Is there such a thing among men as peace, a deep and true peace, without any acquaintance with God? Suppose the case of one possessing high intelligence allied with all the ordinary virtues of human life, but who lacks entirely any personal faith in God as a person. If you ask if his nature is at peace, he answers, Yes; I have no fear, no trouble, except that which comes by ignorance or inattention to law. Life is not long; I shall soon be in the dust, and that will be the end of me. *I am* at peace. The peace of such a man may be calmness, indifference; but cannot be the same thing as comes into a soul and flows through it and down into its far depths as the result of acquaintance with God. A. R.

Thereby good shall come unto thee. The heavenward look draws new strength from the source of all our might. In our work, contemplating as it ought to do exclusively spiritual results, what we do depends largely on what we are, and what we are depends on what we receive, and what we receive depends on the depth and constancy of our communion with God. "The help which is done upon earth He doeth it all Himself." A. M.

22. *Receive the law from His mouth.* Having made thy peace with God, submit to His government, and resolve to be ruled by Him, that thou mayest keep thyself in His love. *Lay up His word in thine heart.* It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it (Prov. 3:18). We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe; and we must lay it up in our hearts as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion. H.

26-29. These words can be regarded as describing the sweet and wonderful prerogatives of the devout life. So understood, they may rebuke and stimulate and encourage us to make our lives conform to the ideal here. Life may be full of delight and confidence in God (v. 26). When we "delight" in a thing or a person, we recognize that that thing or person fits into a cleft in our hearts and corresponds to some need in our natures. We not only recognize its good, sweetness, and adaptation to ourselves, but we actually possess the sweetness that we recognize and the good which we apprehend in it. And so these things, the recognition of the supreme sweetness and all, perfect adaptation and sufficiency of God to all that I need; the suppression of tastes and desires which may conflict with that sweetness, and the actual enjoyment and fruition of the sweetness and preciousness which I apprehend—these things are the very heart of a man's religion. He is the truly devout man who not only knows God to be great and holy, but feels Him to be sweet and sufficient; who not only fears, but loves; who not only seeks and longs, but possesses; or, in one word, true religion is delighting in God. And herein is supplied a very sharp test for us. Do our tastes and inclinations set toward Him, and is He better to us than anything beside? Is God to me my dearest faith, the very home of my heart, to which I instinctively turn? Is the brightness of my day the light of His face? Do I worship because I think it is duty, and are my prayers compulsory and mechanical; or do I worship because my heart goes out to Him? And is my life calm and sweet because I "delight in the Lord"?

The next words will help us to answer. "Thou shalt lift up thy face unto God." That is a clear enough metaphor to express frank confidence of approach to Him. And unless we have that confidence in Him, not because of our merits, but because of His certain love there will be no "delight in the Lord." And there will be no such confidence in Him unless we have "access with confidence by faith" in that Christ who has taken away our sins, and prepared the way for us into the Father's presence, and by whose death and sacrifice, and by it alone, we sinful men, with open face and uplifted foreheads, can stand to receive upon our visage the full beams of His light, and to expatiate and be glad therein. Such a life of delighting in God will be blessed by the frankest intercourse with Him (v. 27). These are three stages of this blessed communion that is possible for men. And note, prayer is not regarded

in this aspect as duty, nor is it even dwelt upon as privilege, but as being the natural outcome and issue of that delighting in God and confident access to Him which have preceded. That is to say, if a man really has set his heart on God, and knows that in Him is all that he needs, then, of course, he will tell Him everything. As surely as instinctive impulse, which needs no spurring from conscience or will, leads us to breathe our confidences to those that we love best, so surely will a true love to God make it the most natural thing in the world to put all our circumstances, wants, and feeling into the shape of prayers. They may be in briefest words. They may scarcely be vocalized at all, but there will be, if there be a true love to Him, an instinctive turning to Him in every circumstance; and the single-worded cry, if it be no more, for help is sufficient. When the desires of our heart are for God, and for conformity to His will, as they will be when we "delight ourselves in Him," then we get our hearts' desires. There is no promise of our being able to impose our wills upon God, which would be a calamity, and not a blessing, but a promise that they who make Him their joy and their desire will never be defrauded of their desire nor robbed of their joy. And so the third stage of this frank intercourse comes. "Thou shalt pay thy vows." All life may become a thank offering to God for the benefits that have flowed unceasing from His hands. First a prayer, then the answer, then the rendered thank-offering. And so, in swift alternation and reciprocity, is carried on the commerce between heaven and earth, between man and God. The desires rise to heaven, but heaven comes down to earth first. And prayer is not the initial stage, but the second in the process. God first gives His promise, and the best prayer is the catching up of God's promise and tossing it back again whence it came. Then comes the second downward motion, which is the answer to prayer, in blessing, and on it follows, finally, the reflection upward, in thankful surrender and service, of the love that has descended on us in answer to our desires.

Such a life will know neither failure nor darkness. "Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee, and the light shall shine upon thy ways" (v. 28). I *decree* a thing—if I am a true Christian, and in the measure in which I am—only when I am quite sure that God has decreed it. And it is only His decrees, registered in the chancery of my will, of which I may be certain that they shall be established. There will be no failures to

the man whose life's purpose is to serve God, and to grow like Him. To serve Him, and to fall into the line of His purpose, and to determine nothing, nor obstinately want anything until we are sure that it is His will; that is the secret of never failing in what we undertake. So with the promise of light to shine upon our paths. It is "the light which never was on sea or land;" and you and I, if we delight ourselves "in the Lord," will have an unsetting sun to light our paths; "and at eventide," and in the mirkest midnight, "there will be light" in the darkness.

Lastly, such a life will be always hopeful, and finally crowned with deliverance (v. 29). "When they cast thee down, thou shalt say, There is lifting up." Even in a blessed life times will come when the path plunges downward into some valley of shadow. But even then the traveller will bate no jot of hope. He will in his heart say Up even while sense says Down. The devout life is largely independent of circumstances, and is upheld and calmed by quiet certainty that the general trend of its path is upward, which enables it to trudge hopefully down an occasional dip in the road. And the issue of all will be, "He will save the humble person"—namely, the man who is "lowly of eyes" in conscious unworthiness, even while he lifts up his face to God in confidence in his Father's love. The "saving" meant here is, of course, temporal deliverance from passing outward peril. But we may permissibly give it wider and deeper meaning. Continuous partial deliverances lead on to and bring about final full salvation. For to the soul which has delighted itself in God, and looked in His face with frank confidence, and poured out its desires to Him, and been the recipient of numberless answers, and the seat of numberless thank-offerings, has travelled along life's common way in cheerful godliness, has had the light of heaven shining on the path, and has found an immortal hope springing, a heaven of endless blessedness and close communion with God is the only possible ending. A. M.

There is nothing but religion, or the life in God, that can be looked to for the completion of a soul. And it has three great advantages that differ it from everything else: It takes hold of the soul's eternity and its sin, to raise up, harmonize, inwardly purify, glorify and settle it, in a rest of everlasting equilibrium in God. It takes hold of all possible conditions and callings, completing as truly the menial as the employer, the bondman as the master, the unlettered as the scholar, the man that is grimed

by labor as the man of leisure or the monk in his cell. It completes one degree of capacity as certainly as another, preparing even the feeblest to fill out its measure as roundly and blissfully as the highest. Such is religion, the great all-formative grace for man. Nothing but this can even dare to promise any fit completion of humanity. All the harmonies, all the great inspirations, all the immovable and immortal confidences, all the contacts of infinity and seals of infinite possession, are here. H. B.

Everything that befalls us, every object with which we come in contact, all the variety of condition, all the variations of our experience, have one distinct and specific purpose. They are all meant to tell upon character, to make us better in sundry ways, to bring us closer to God, and to fill us more full of Him. And that one effect may be produced by the most opposite incidents, just as in some great machine you may have two wheels turning in opposite ways, and yet contributing to one-resulting motion. And so, by sorrow and by joy, by light and by dark, by giving and withholding, by granting and refusing, by all the varieties of our circumstances, and by everything that lies around us, God works to prepare us for Himself. And while, thus, the most opposite things may produce the same effect, the same thing will produce opposite effects according to the way in which we take it. There is nothing that can be relied upon to do a man only good; there is nothing about which we need fear that its mission is only to do evil. For all depends on the recipient, who can make everything to fulfil the purpose for which God has sent him

everything. So life is what you and I will to make it, and the events which befall us are for our rising or our falling according as we determine they shall be, and according as we use them. Think, then, how solemn, how awful, how great a thing it is to stand here a free agent, able to determine my character and my condition, surrounded by all these circumstances and the subject of all these wise and manifold Divine dealings, in each of which there lie dormant, to be evoked by me, tremendous possibilities of elevation even to the very presence of God, or of sinking into the depths of separation from Him. A. M.

30. A good man is a public good. Sinners fare the better for saints, whether they are aware of it or no. If Eliphaz intended hereby (as some think he did) to insinuate that Job's prayers were not prevailing, nor his hands pure (for then he would have relieved others, much more himself), he was afterward made to see his error, when it appeared that Job had a better interest in heaven than he had; for he and his three friends, who, in this matter, were not innocent, were delivered by *the pureness of Job's hands* (42 : 8). H.

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This speech, in fact, brings the whole argument on the side of Job's opponents to a close. Bildad has no more to add. Zophar is henceforth silent. The immediate effect upon Job's mind is that of utter weariness and prostration. In the following answer he can but repeat arguments which, though unanswered, have been rejected with scorn. *Cook.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

1 THEN Job answered and said,
2 Even to-day is my complaint rebellious
My stroke is heavier than my groaning.
3 Oh that I knew where I might find him,
That I might come even to his seat !
4 I would set my cause in order before him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.
5 I would know the words which he would
answer me,
And understand what he would say unto me.
6 Would he contend with me in the greatness
of his power ?
Nay ; but he would give heed unto me.
7 There the upright might reason with him ;

So should I be delivered for ever from my
judge.
8 Behold, I go forward, but he is not *there* ;
And backward, but I cannot perceive
him :
9 On the left hand, when he doth work, but I
cannot behold him :
He hideth himself on the right hand, that I
cannot see him.
10 But he knoweth the way that I take ;
When he hath tried me, I shall come forth
as gold.
11 My foot hath held fast to his steps ;
His way have I kept, and turned not aside,

- 12 I have not gone back from the commandment of his lips ;
 I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.
 13 But he is in one *mind*, and who can turn him ?
 And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.
 14 For he performeth that which is appointed for me :

- And many such things are with him.
 15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence ;
 When I consider, I am afraid of him.
 16 For God hath made my heart faint,
 And the Almighty hath troubled me :
 17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness,
 Neither did he cover the thick darkness from my face.

CHAPS. XXIII., XXIV. JOB'S THIRD REPLY
 TO ELIPHAZ.

FROM this point forward, with the exception of a few truisms advanced by Bildad (chap. 25), which are wholly inapplicable to the matter in debate, the next nine chapters are wholly devoted to the self-justification into which Job enters against the charges of his friends, interspersed with musings on the ways of Providence, which are always applicable to the questions in dispute. That he goes on thus uninterruptedly is to be ascribed to the friends declining to answer him any further. Indeed there is an indication that after Job had replied to Bildad in the twenty-sixth chapter, he made a pause as if expecting the reply of Zophar, whose turn it then was to speak ; but finding that he made no sign to avail himself of the opportunity, he proceeded. Thus at the commencement of the twenty-seventh chapter, we find the unusual introduction : " Moreover, Job continued his parable, and said." *Kitto*.

As in the two preceding circles of debate, Job's mind is too much absorbed in the contemplation of the great mystery of providence, which he had set before himself in chap. 21, to be able for a time to give heed to the shameful charges of Eliphaz against him. He dwells in his reply still, continuing the thought of chap. 21, upon the riddle of God's rule of the world. He misses rectitude in this rule, and can observe no principle of moral government as he understands it. First (vs. 2-7), with his mind full of the sense of his own innocence, and of the mysterious wrong which he suffers from God, Job gives new and importunate expression to the wish that he knew where to find God, and that he could come to His tribunal and judgment-seat. Then he would set his cause fully before Him, and hear from the Almighty His plea against him, sure that his innocence would appear and that he would be delivered forever from his judge. Second (vs. 8-12), from this dream of a judgment-seat of God such as the judgment-seat of a human judge who would " give heed " to him, Job suddenly awakens to the feeling of what his actual position is. He

cannot find God, whose presence he feels ; He everywhere eludes him. Yet He knows Job's innocence, and that if He tried him he would come forth as gold, for all his life long he has kept His way and not departed from the commandments of His lips. Third (vs. 13-17). But He is unchangeable in His purpose. He has resolved to destroy Job, and who can turn Him from that on which He has set His mind ? It is this arbitrary, mysterious way of God that confounds and paralyzes Job's mind, not his calamities or his death in itself. A. B. D.

2. Though we may by no means justify the murmurings of Job nor the doubting despondency which he manifests, we cannot wonder at their existence, but rather stand amazed before the massive fortitude which formed the chief characteristic of his conduct. Nevertheless, he *did* murmur against God, he *did* miscalculate Divine providence. A. M. A. W. —A godly man may see two things in the heaviest strokes of his affliction, which may provoke him to thanksgiving—at least which may stop him from all immoderate complaining. First, that God hath a respect to his good in his heaviest afflictions, and that the issue shall certainly be good to him ; and secondly, that how heavy soever his stroke is, his sin hath deserved a heavier, and that God could have made it heavier, even his little finger heavier upon him than his loins have been. *Caryl*.

3. Eliphaz has bidden him return to God, and given him sweet promises if he will so do ; Job takes him at his word, so far forth at least that he longs supremely after God's presence ; though he turns to God not as a sinner, but as a man with a just and righteous cause. J. F. G.

3-7. **Oh that I knew where I might find Him !** So just did his cause appear to be that it seemed to the sufferer that, could he only be permitted to plead before God, he could not be denied the justification for which he asked. *Curry*.—Much is left in him still, much that, in all times, is dear to God. There is the eager, the passionate desire for truth—" Give me light, and let me die." And there is the firm persistence in calling on his God to re-

veal the truth to him. Through all the darkness that surrounds him, he is on the search for God. *Dean Bradley.*

Oh that I knew where I might find Him! The anxious heart of humanity speaks out in this sentence. The more the mind grasps the less it can be satisfied without God; the more the soul knows the stronger are the constitutional and eternal necessities of its being to know God; the vaster the reach of its travel in the created demonstrations of God, the more pressing and irresistible become the cravings of its immortal nature for the sight of God. For, wherever you go, whatsoever you do, whatsoever you know, rest is never in all creation, but in God; happiness is never in created things, but in God. From the depths of immortality, the unsatisfied, restless yearning rises after God. The depths of an infinite despair, to a being endowed with intelligence and immortality, are in the condition of not finding, seeing, knowing God. *Cheever.*

Thou art seeking thy light in the dispersion of the cloud, and all the time thy light is *in* the cloud. Thou hast been down in the valley of the shadow, and thou hast been looking up to the calm heavens to find thy God. The calm heavens have not answered thee, and thou hast said: "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself." Yet all the time thy God has been beside thee in the valley, a sharer in the shadow of thy life. Thou hast been looking too far to find Him; thou hast cried to the heavens when He was at the very door. He was speaking in the voices that seemed to deny His presence; He was manifested in the shades that appeared to veil His form. He came to thee in the night that His glory might be concealed. He came to thee unaccompanied and unadorned, that He might know whether He were loved for Himself alone. The night under which thou hast murmured has been hiding in its fold a wondrous treasure—the very presence of the King of kings; wherefore didst thou not see the bright light in the clouds? *G. Matheson.*

Oh this wonder of discovery, the knowledge of God—who can find words for it, or the change it must needs make! It even makes the soul another creature to itself. Now it is no more blank to God, tortures itself no more in guesses dim, sighs no more—"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" It has recovered the major part of existence that before was lost; it knows not only itself, but it has the knowledge of God; and in that fact it is raised out of its mere finite speck of magnitude, into the conscious participation of being infinite.

Everything is now become luminous. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new—great as new, and holy as great, and blessed as holy. *Bushnell.*

Look at the incarnation and say if God does not want man to find Him? Heathen mythology had the idea obscurely. But God's Word alone reveals an incarnation—that is, "*God with us.*" Look at redemption also—the new birth. If all other evidence of Christianity were wanting, we would defend it on the basis of the new birth. The Holy Spirit changing man's nature, making him His temple, purifying him, sustaining him, till he is presented "faultless" to the Father, with exceeding joy. Who, in meditating on these things, can doubt that *God wants* man to find Him, or that man *can* find Him? There is a necessity laid upon every soul to find God. No matter what knowledge any man may have gained, if he has not gained the knowledge of God, he has missed the object of his creation and of his search. Think of such a man launched into eternity bereft of all his knowledge—in the universe then without anything that can avail him; without God, or only a God of justice to him then! If you doubt that man can find God, listen to the testimony of the Church in every age, to the song of the great multitude before the throne. *B. M. Palmer.*

6. This question, with its negative answer, indicates how far Job has advanced in his conviction of God's favor since he conquered his way to the assurance that his Redeemer liveth. He is sure now that if he could find God he would find Him a friend. *J. F. G.*

7. This passage is of great importance, proving that Job knows that when God manifests Himself the cause of righteousness is assured; there can be no unrighteousness with Him.

8, 9. Very beautiful as this is, the effect is much heightened when it is recollected that these references are really to the cardinal points of the compass, and should have been so rendered. Noyes gives it thus—

"But behold I go eastward, and He is not there;

And westward, but I cannot perceive Him;

To the north, where He worketh, but I cannot behold Him;

He hideth himself in the south, and I cannot see Him."

The Hebrews, in common with other Orientals, regarded themselves as facing the east, instead of the north, as we do. Then, of course, the west was behind them, the south on the

right hand, and on the left the north. The expressions applied to the north and to the south are especially worthy of consideration. "On the left hand, *where He doth work*." The phrase does not so much signify His working, as the manifestations of His working, which in the north are here supposed to be more conspicuous than in any other quarter. Thus in Ezekiel's vision of the cherubim the whole magnificent scene is described as coming from the north. And so in Zechariah's vision, the horses that came out of the mountains are represented as going, or returning, to the north as their place of rest, after having gone through the earth. These passages, with others of the like purport, show that the northern regions, and especially the mountains in the north, were regarded as the seat of striking and peculiar manifestations of the Divine glory. But as the north is the quarter of manifestation, so the south is the quarter of concealment. In the north God *works*, in the south He *hides* Himself. To apprehend this in the fulness of its meaning, it is necessary to bear in mind that the south was to the ancients an unknown region. To these hidden and unknown quarters Job says that he now turned, after he had in vain explored every other quarter of the heavens in search of some manifestations of God. Yet here also his search was vain. God hid or concealed Himself in the remote and inaccessible south, so that he could not approach Him. *Kitto*.

8, 9. The efforts of the soul to find Him whom it seeks were never described more truly or affectingly; such sorrow can only be felt by a spiritual mind; contrast this with the feelings described (21 : 14, 15 and 24 : 13, 17). It should be observed that Job's conviction of God's absolute presence comes out most strongly when he feels that he cannot discern Him. *Cook*.—Though Job cannot find God, and this is the very centre of his agony, yet he never loses the sense that God is *somewhere*. He never relapses into atheism. It is not a mere blind force which controls the rising of the morning or the shining of the pole-star. God is in the north, *working*, though he cannot see Him; in the south, though He veils Himself. *V*.

A perfect revelation of God to human intelligence would be impossible. Were God to undertake the task of revealing Himself to me in all His completeness, in order to succeed, He would be obliged by the nature of things to expand my intelligence into dimensions like His own. There is no help for it—to being so narrow as men, God must be, in large part, shrouded in impenetrable obscurity. *A revelation of God*

much short of what our intelligence could grasp would consume us. Suppose God should take as much of His nature as we can understand, and bring it to us in the way of adequate personal manifestation to the senses. Could we endure the exhibition? Why, we can hardly bear such sights and sounds as we ourselves can produce. We ourselves can kindle such glory of conflagration, can detonate such might and majesty of sound, as destroy sight and hearing, and even shock the weakly out of life. And surely if God should come upon our senses with such imperialism of sights and sounds as would appropriately represent the utmost power and knowledge we can conceive—as would worthily express our ideas of eternity and almightiness and omniscience—that moment would be our last.

A revelation of God such as would not consume us would yet so shake and derange the mental faculties as to prevent due use of the revelation. These delicate nerves and brains of ours, that so bow and break at the approach of what, after all, is mere nature—what would they not do at the approach of the Great Supernatural in any fitting circumstance! The man who asks that there should be made to us a full discovery of God knows not what he asks. Does he want the world peopled with gods instead of men? Does he want to become a handful of ashes, or at least to be dazzled into corpsehood, by an insufferable brightness? Does he even want his reason and nervous system to fall to pieces under a manifestation of the Eternal? If not, he must be content to have these veils between him and God. *Burr*.

10. The way that I take. The marginal rendering is closer and more forcible; *the way that is with me, i.e.*, which I habitually walk in. **When.** This word is unnecessary and should be omitted. God has tried Job, who knows that when the fiery trial is over he will come out of the furnace as pure gold. *Cook*.—Though he cannot find God, yet God keeps an eye on him. "He knows the way that is with me," the course of my life, the way in which I habitually walk; and that way is *His* way. My foot hath held His steps, and His way have I kept. Job has faith, too, in the happy outcome of his trial. "I shall come forth as gold." This is the first hint of his suspicion that punishment may be of the nature of discipline. *V*.

It is a great comfort to those who mean honestly that God understands their meaning, though men do not, cannot, or will not. He approves of it: "He knows that however I

may sometimes have *taken a false step*, yet I have still *taken a good way*; have *chosen the way of truth*, and therefore He knows it"—that is, He accepts it and is well pleased with it, as He is said to *know the way of the righteous* (Psalm 1:6). From this Job infers, *When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*. They that *keep the way of the Lord* may comfort themselves when they are in affliction with these three things: That they are but tried; it is not intended for their hurt, but for their honor and benefit; *it is the trial of their faith* (1 Pet. 1:7). That, when they are sufficiently tried they shall come forth out of the furnace, and not be left to consume in it as dross or reprobate silver. The trial will have an end; *God will not contend forever*. That they shall come forth as gold, pure in itself and precious to the refiner; they shall come forth as gold *approved and improved*; found to be good and made to be better. Afflictions are to us as we are; those that go gold into the furnace will come out no worse. H. —Gold is a metal so invincible and unconquerable that no fire can consume it; it may burn it indeed and melt it; the dross indeed doth consume and give way to the power of the fire, but the gold remains and holds its ground; yea, it gets ground even of the furnace and fire itself; for the more it is burned and melted the more it recovers its color, and the more it shakes off its dross and dishonor. *Bunyan*.

Affliction is the trial and touchstone of sincerity. When God doth afflict you, then He doth bring you to the touchstone to see whether you are good metal or no; He doth bring you then to the furnace to try whether you be dross or gold. Affliction is the great discoverer that unmasks us. While religion and prosperity go together, it is hard to say which a man follows; but when once they are forced to a separation, where the heart was will soon be manifest. *Caryl*.—The design of God in all the afflictions that befall His people is only to try them; it is not to wrong them nor to ruin them, as ignorant souls are apt to think. "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold," says patient Job. So in Deut. 8:2, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no." God afflicted them thus, that He might make known to themselves and others what was in their hearts. *T. Brooks*.—Job out of his own experience says: "He knoweth my way and

trieth me, and I shall come forth like the gold." In respect of which happy issue given by the Lord to all our trials, we have just cause to bear them all with patience and comfort, with joy and thanksgiving. For if we be not counterfeit metal, but good gold, why should we fear the furnace of affliction, seeing it will not consume us like straw or chaff, but only try us and in trying purify us; that coming to the touchstone we may be approved, and so be reserved forever in God's treasury of blessedness? Then let God's faithful ones endure all these trials with patience, comfort, and rejoicing, seeing they do by exercising manifest God's graces, that He may be glorified in His gifts, and His gifts crowned in them. *Downname*.

As frankincense, when it is put into the fire, giveth the greater perfume; as spice, if it be pounded and beaten smelleth the sweeter; as the earth, when it is torn up by the plough, becometh more fruitful; the seed in the ground, after frost and snow and winter storms, springeth the ranker; the nigher the vine is pruned to the stock, the greater grape it yieldeth; the grape, when it is most pressed and beaten, maketh the sweetest wine; linen, when it is washed, wrung, and beaten, is so made fairer and whiter; even so the children of God receive great benefit by affliction; for by it God washeth and scoureth, schooleth and nutureth them, that so, through many tribulations, they may enter into rest. *Carew*.—That scouring and rubbing which frets others shall make them shine the brighter; and that weight which crushes and keeps others under shall but make them, like the palm-tree, grow better and higher; and that hammer which knocks others all in pieces, shall but knock them nearer to Christ, the corner-stone. Stars shine brightest in the darkest night; torches give the best light when beaten; grapes yield most wine when most pressed; spices smell sweetest when pounded; vines are the better for bleeding; gold looks the better for scouring; juniper smells sweetest in the fire; chamomile, the more you tread it the more you spread it. Where afflictions hang heaviest corruptions hang loosest; and grace that is hid in nature, as sweet water in rose-leaves, is then most fragrant when the fire of affliction is put under to distil it out. *T. Brooks*.

We have a Brother who has Himself travelled every foot of the road by which we have to go, and His footsteps have marked out with blood a track for us to follow, and have trodden a footpath through the else pathless waste. He knows "how to encamp in this wilderness,"

for He Himself has "tabernacled among us," and by experience has learned the weariness of the journey and the perils of the wilderness. His life is our pattern. However diverse our duties and circumstances are, the principles which come out in the Divine record of that fair life and wondrous death will fit with equal closeness to us all; and so Divine and all-comprehensive is it that it abides as the sufficient pattern for every class, for every stage, for every variety of character, for every era, and every land, till the end and beyond the end. A. M.

13. But this is only a gleam of light. He returns to his great problem, the apparent injustice of God's administration. V.—**In one mind**, or, "He is one," *i.e.*, "changes not." Job speaks not of the mind of God which he knows to be with him, but of His dealings, which he feels to be against him; He persists in one course. *Cook*.—Pain, penury, the scorn of men, the unfriendliness of friends—all these may be borne; it is not these which break his spirit. What unmans him is not this *outer* darkness, but the inner darkness which it breeds, the eclipse of faith, the rejection of a love unrequited and disdained, the hideous confusion of thought bred by the conviction that the God who is present to bruise his heart is not present to explain and indicate the course He takes with him. *Cox*.

14. In the light of Job's new solution note how differently God's dealings look to him. He sees the same changeless, inexorable, inscrutable work that he contemplated before, and the sight fills him with trembling; but he does not, as then, trace in it God's injustice and persecution; he is content to let it be so, though

wondering at its darkness. This is his only remaining problem, and it is to this that the Lord addresses His words from the whirlwind. J. F. G.

He performeth that which is appointed for me. He has a purpose, not only in relation to the universe as a whole, but to every part of the whole; not only to communities, but to individuals. "*Me.*" Wonderful is the thought that God has a purpose concerning my little life, conduct, and destiny. *D. Thomas*.—God professes in His Word to have purposes prearranged for all events; to govern by a plan which is from eternity even, and which, in some proper sense, comprehends everything. And what is this but another way of conceiving that God has a definite place and plan adjusted for every human being. There is, then, a definite and proper end or issue, for every man's existence; an end, which, to the heart of God is the good intended for him, or for which he was intended; that which he is privileged to become, called to become, ought to become; that which God will assist him to become, and which he cannot miss, save by his own fault. *Bushnell*.

16. Job could not trace God in His works, or in His providences—all was dark *in respect to himself*. But there was still support in the belief that *God knew him* (v. 6), *knew his way perfectly* (v. 10). But the other thought, of *fixed law*, which is nothing else than *arbitrary* decrees (vs. 13, 14), in other words, a blind fatality, whether called God or nature, which had no regard to human affairs at all, no moral concern for man—this was anguish unalleviated. It was this that weakened—in modern phrase, *broke his heart* (v. 16). T. L.

CHAPTER XXIV.

- 1 WHY are times not laid up by the Almighty?
And why do not they which know him see
his days?
- 2 There are that remove the landmarks;
They violently take away flocks, and feed
them.
- 3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless,
They take the widow's ox for a pledge.
- 4 They turn the needy out of the way:
The poor of the earth hide themselves.
- 5 Behold, as wild asses in the desert

- They go forth to their work, seeking dili-
gently for meat;
The wilderness *yieldeth* them food for their
children.
- 6 They cut their provender in the field;
And they glean the vintage of the wicked.
 - 7 They lie all night naked without clothing,
And have no covering in the cold.
 - 8 They are wet with the showers of the moun-
tains,
And embrace the rock for want of a shelter.

- 9 There are that pluck the fatherless from the breast,
And take a pledge of the poor :
- 10 *So that* they go about naked without clothing,
And being an hungered they carry the sheaves ;
- 11 They make oil within the walls of these men ;
They tread *their* winepresses, and suffer thirst.
- 12 From out of the populous city men groan,
And the soul of the wounded crieth out :
Yet God regardeth not the folly.
- 13 These are of them that rebel against the light ;
They know not the ways thereof,
Nor abide in the paths thereof.
- 14 The murderer riseth with the light, he killeth the poor and needy ;
And in the night he is as a thief.
- 15 The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight,
Saying, No eye shall see me :
And he disguiseth his face.
- 16 In the dark they dig through houses :
They shut themselves up in the day-time ;
They know not the light.
- 17 For the morning is to all of them as the shadow of death ;

- For they know the terrors of the shadow of death.
- 18 He is swift upon the face of the waters ;
Their portion is cursed in the earth :
He turneth not by the way of the vineyards.
- 19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters :
So doth Sheol those which have sinned.
- 20 The womb shall forget him ; the worm shall feed sweetly on him ;
He shall be no more remembered :
And unrighteousness shall be broken as a tree.
- 21 He devoureth the barren that beareth not ;
And doeth not good to the widow.
- 22 He draweth away the mighty also by his power :
He riseth up, and no man is sure of life.
- 23 *God* giveth them to be in security, and they rest thereon ;
And his eyes are upon their ways.
- 24 They are exalted ; yet a little while, and they are gone ;
Yea, they are brought low, they are taken out of the way as all other,
And are cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.
- 25 And if it be not so now, who will prove me a liar,
And make my speech nothing worth ?

Chap. 24. From his own mysterious affliction he now passes to the mystery of God's permitting the evil of the world to go on unpunished. V.—Job begins by asking, Why are not times (of assize) appointed by the Almighty ? and, Why do they that know Him not see His days (of judgment) ? This is Job's complaint, that God the judge and ruler of the world fails to judge and rule it in righteousness. Men do not behold Him appointing times and holding days for doing judgment on wrong, and righting the oppressed. On the contrary, the powerful tyrants oppress and the miserable poor are oppressed (vs. 3-11), and God regards not the wrong (v. 12). Besides these public wrongdoers, there are other transgressors who shun the light. The murderer, the adulterer, and the robber ply their unhallowed trade in the darkness (vs. 13-17). And all of them, instead of being visited by God with sudden judgments, as the Friends insisted and as the popular literature described (vs. 18-21), are upheld in power by God, made to dwell in safety, and at last brought in peace to a natural death "like all others" (vs. 22-24). A. B. D.

The whole speech is most painful ; but, bearing in mind the real scope and object of Job's

trials, we see that it still leaves the foundation untouched. Far from forsaking God, Job's great misery is that he cannot find Him ; far from believing that the inexplicable indications of injustice prove that God in His essential attributes is unjust, Job is sure that when God does manifest Himself, the righteous cause must prosper ; believing most fully that his righteousness here will have no recompense, nor save him from the most cruel afflictions, "he holds fast to his integrity," and finds, as heretofore, his only consolation in the consciousness that he has walked with God. He doubts not that God has His own appointed seasons and methods of judgment, though neither he nor his opponents can discern them. His despair is complete so far as regards this life, but it does not reach the centre of his being ; he still offers the sublimest of all spectacles ; not that of a good man struggling with adversity, but that of one who, though prostrated by it and relinquishing all struggles as utterly useless, still cleaves to goodness and to God. *Cook.*

2-4. Fearlessly and unpunished, the oppression of the helpless and defenceless, though deserving of a curse, rages in every form. They

remove the landmarks ; they steal flocks, the ass of the orphans (their only beast for labor) they carry away, and the ox of the widow ; they turn the needy aside from the way, so that they wander hither and thither without home or right, and the poor of the land are obliged to hide themselves altogether. D.

5-8. A continuation of the thought of v. 4. "The poor" of the land are the persons spoken of, who, on account of the cruelty of their oppressors are compelled to *go forth*, like "the wild asses" of the desert, seeking a scanty subsistence in the open rocky pastures. They are also compelled to perform hard service, gathering fodder in the field and gleaning the *vintage* for the wicked who oppress them. By *night* they are unprotected from the *cold* and rain, and are driven to hide themselves among the rocks, or in caves, for *shelter*. The imagery is peculiarly Arabic, that of the open desert, or outlying pastures. The whole is designed to show how the ungodly oppress the poor, and yet go unpunished. *Curry.*—We have thus before us a graphic portraiture of savage hordes, who, when displaced by a more civilized and powerful race, prowl in the desert, at once desperate and pitiless. It is evident that the writer describes occurrences of his own time and country.

13-17. These verses go farther still ; they describe a class of still more desperate offenders ; the oppressors and usurers previously described had a semblance of right, and may have kept within the limits of hard law, as yet unmitigated by the Mosaic code ; those who now come before us sin against light. *Cook.*—They are murderers, thieves, adulterers, and burglars, and the methods by which they ply their evil arts are here indicated. They are night prowlers for plunder, but do not scruple to carry out their designs by murder itself. The *adulterer* also seeks the aid of darkness, and of a disguised habit, that he may not be detected, while others *dig through houses* for purposes of plunder. To all such *light* is unwelcome, because it stops their pursuits and exposes them to detection. Thus by their skill and contrivance they escape danger, and Divine justice allows them to remain undiscovered and unpunished.

21-24. Still another class of evil-doers is now introduced—men of position and political power, who, like the unjust judge of the parable, disregard the claims of right and justice, and have no pity on the poor and helpless. They surround themselves with confederates in oppression, and spoil and murder to promote their iniquitous purposes ; and they often pros-

per for a season, or to life's end, when, as is the common lot of men, they are gathered to the grave by the great harvester, Death. All this, it is assumed, is patent to every one who will consider the case, and so Job closes (v. 25) with a challenge to his antagonists to disprove his facts, or to show any want of pertinence in his arguments that God does not, in His judgments, distinguish between the wicked and the righteous. *Curry.*

24. The form of their death itself is by no means such as to reveal the retributive justice of God. And does it become at all manifest during their life ? These, whose trust in their own strength God might smite down by His almighty power, He preserves alive, even in critical positions, by His power. God grants them a secure, peaceful existence, sustains them, and raises them up again ; His eyes are on the ways of these men—they stand, as it were, beneath His special protection. They are brought to death without great suffering like other men. D.—Job thus declares, in direct opposition to the other speakers, that so far from living in terror, the evil-doer is in perfect security ; instead of being overthrown he is supported ; he is an object of special providential care ; he rises to eminence, and when, like all men, he dies, it is by a sudden or painless death, preceded by no lingering disease, and not until he has reached his full term of life, like corn ripe for the harvest. In all this exaggeration there is an underground of substantial facts. It would have been easy to prove that such is not the general result of an evil life ; but nothing short of a clear proof that no innocent man is ever overwhelmed by misfortune, and no guilty man ever escapes it, would overthrow Job's position. The mystery is unsolved ; Job does not doubt that God has a solution ; he is sure that his opponents have not. "Who," he concludes (v. 25), "will prove the falsehood of this statement, and invalidate my argument ?" With this last outburst the storm passes by. *Cook.*

Job had now attacked their main position and had appealed to facts in defence of what he held. He maintained that, as a matter of fact, the wicked were prospered, that they often lived to old age, and died a peaceful death without any direct demonstration of the Divine displeasure. He boldly appeals to any one to deny this or to prove the contrary. The appeal was decisive. The fact was undeniable, and the controversy was closed. *Barnes.*—Job has shown that God's rule of the world is not just, in the sense in which the friends insisted that it

was just, and in the sense in which his own moral feeling demanded that it should be just. God is not righteous, in the sense that He punishes wickedness with outward calamity and rewards the righteous with outward good. So far the three friends are defeated, and with their defeat on the general question their infer-

ences from Job's calamities as to his guilt fall to the ground. A. B. D.—Job's conclusive victory over his friends is indicated by the challenge with which he here seals his words. No one takes it up ; for though Bildad yet speaks, his words are so aside from the issue as to be a virtual confession of defeat. J. F. G.

CHAPTER XXV.

- 1 THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
- 2 Dominion and fear are with him ;
He maketh peace in his high places.
- 3 Is there any number of his armies ?
And upon whom doth not his light arise ?
- 4 How then can man be just with God ?

Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman ?

- 5 Behold, even the moon hath no brightness,
And the stars are not pure in his sight :
- 6 How much less man, that is a worm !
And the son of man, which is a worm !

BILDAD responds wholly without the rancor and bitterness that have characterized the friends' answers hitherto, and with general considerations quite apart from the question at issue. Perhaps it is Job's persistent affirmation of his integrity, that immediately calls them forth ; but Bildad no longer makes it a personal matter, and seems to repeat his lesson almost mechanically, the chapter from his well-conned Wisdom which is least to be called in question. J. F. G.—He falls back upon the original position of Eliphaz in his opening speech—viz., the universal sinfulness of men, in which Job is of necessity involved. He thus not only impliedly retracts the charges hitherto insinuated or openly made against Job, but concedes his inability to conduct the argument further. He has nothing to adduce but what had been adduced and answered long before. The same thing is likewise intimated by the brevity of his speech. W. H. G.

This short speech of Bildad shows the complete exhaustion of Job's opponents. The speaker leaves unnoticed the question raised by Job, and simply repeats two commonplaces, which had been advanced in the beginning of the controversy by Eliphaz ; but so far from being disputed by Job, had been repeatedly urged and illustrated by him. God is omnipotent ; hence follows the duty of unreserved submission, an inference which Bildad leaves to be drawn by the hearer ; man is naturally unclean ; how, then, can he be justified by Him who discerns impurity in the very heavens ?

The tone of Bildad's speech, though without an attempt to grapple with the real difficulties of the question, is pleasing in tone, free from Zophar's violence, and from the worldliness of Eliphaz. He does not repeat the old charges and insinuations against Job, but admonishes him to submission on grounds which are not calculated to cause any personal irritation, and which Job himself would be first to admit. He brings the discussion, so far as his party is concerned, to a close. Cook.

2, 3. Dominion and fear are with Him. He is an awful God who hath the absolute dominion over all the world ; He ordereth the very heavens so that there is a perfect harmony in all the apparently contrary motions thereof ; and contriveth all things so that they agree to glorify Him ! What innumerable troops of glorious angels hath He there above, and what infinite armies of His creatures to execute His will upon all occasions ! And how gracious is He in sending forth His light into all the corners of the earth ! and how wise in searching all the secrets of human actions and counsels ! Bishop H.

2. He maketh peace in His high places. The high places are *His* high places ; for *the heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's* in a peculiar manner ; peace is God's work ; where it is made it is He that makes it. In heaven there is perfect peace ; for there is perfect holiness, and there is God, who is love. H.—A great truth lies deep in these words, that peace is a creation ; and all creation is an

attribute of God. The most beautiful word that ever hung upon the mouth of man is peace, because it is sweetness to his fellow-men and it makes sacrifice to God. Many summers and many winters of life go to ripen that fruit. And of that beautiful fruit of the lips hear what God says : " I create the fruit of the lips ; peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith the Lord ; I will heal him." The words are meant to teach us that up in His high places God is ever devising and carrying on processes which are to produce peace for men in this lower state. In mystery, in solitude, and in largeness, before the foundations of the earth were laid God began to make peace in His high places. He willed that great scheme whereby Christ should come in the fulness of time to make redemption for a yet unformed and yet uncreated world. The ruin of Eden was prepared for in the high places of the eternal mind ; and at once, at the moment of the fall, the promise came that peace should be restored on earth. The far end of Christ's work was to give peace to men. J. V.

4. Bildad's question finds its answer, the grand difficulty of all heathen nations and ages its complete solution, in the Gospel. At the foot of the cross, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, the sinner changes into a saint ; the unjust into the just ; the condemned into the acquitted ; the child of wrath into an heir of heaven. In the eyes of his Sovereign Judge, the believer, happy man ! is without spot, or stain, or any such thing. " There is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ,

who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." T. G.

Justification (considered in the Gospel notion) is that gracious sentence of God wherein, with respect to Christ apprehended by faith, He absolveth the believer from sin and death, and doth repute him just and righteous unto eternal life. This doctrine of free justification is the foundation and corner-stone of all our comfort. For whereas there is a double change in the state of the sinner—first, a relative change ; secondly, an absolute and real change—the one is made in sanctification, the other in justification. Sanctification is a real change, subduing corruption, destroying the power of sin in us. But justification is not a change in the person ; it is only a relative change as to his state. To justify is a law term signifying the pronouncing or declaring of a man righteous ; so that justification is an act of God upon us or toward us. Sanctification is an act of God in us. This blessed grace of sanctification always followeth the grace of justification as an effect or fruit of it ; and though it may be easily distinguished from it, yet it can no more be separated or divided from it than heat from fire or motion from life. Caryl.

5, 6. There is something truly sublime in this representation of the Supreme Ruler. His splendor darkens all ; His radiant hosts are numberless ; His light and purity surpass all created excellence ; the heavenly bodies are eclipsed and retire before Him. Still greater is the disparity of man, whose impurity and meanness will not bear His inspection. Anon.

CHAPTER XXVI.

1 THEN Job answered and said,
2 How hast thou helped him that is without
power !
How hast thou saved the arm that hath no
strength !
3 How hast thou counselled him that hath no
wisdom,
And plentifully declared sound knowledge !
4 To whom hast thou uttered words ?
And whose spirit came forth from thee ?
5 They that are deceased tremble
Beneath the waters and the inhabitants
thereof.
6 Sheol is naked before him,
And Abaddon hath no covering.

7 He stretcheth out the north over empty
space,
And hangeth the earth upon nothing.
8 He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds ;
And the cloud is not rent under them.
9 He closeth in the face of his throne,
And spreadeth his cloud upon it.
10 He hath described a boundary upon the face
of the waters,
Unto the confines of light and darkness.
11 The pillars of heaven tremble
And are astonished at his rebuke.
12 He stirreth up the sea with his power,
And by his understanding he smiteth through
Rahab.

13 By his spirit the heavens are garnished ;
His hand hath pierced the swift serpent.
14 Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways :

And how small a whisper do we hear of him !
But the thunder of his power who can under-
stand ?

WITH this chapter begins the magnificent series of discourses in which Job reviews and sums up the whole controversy. He adopts all that is substantially true in the arguments of his opponents, and recedes from a position which, though tenable against them, does not accord with his own principles, or truly represent the results of his own experience. After a few words of well-deserved, but not bitter rebuke (vs. 1-4), he enlarges upon the first great truth which has been often stated, but neither on their side nor on his without some admixture of error or of rebellious feeling, the truth of God's almightiness and omniscience ; and concludes a description, crowded with sublime imagery, by a declaration that all that can be conceived or received by man is but a faint echo of the voice which, if uttered, would overwhelm the spirit of man. *Cook.*

Bildad had spoken only of God's kingdom in *heaven* ; Job adds the counterpart, His kingdom in *Hades*, the world of death. Thence he ascends to the creation, the origin and foundation of Divine dominion ; and finisheth with a display of some illustrious operations of Providence for the benefit and preservation of our system. He shows them that he firmly believed in the all-wise and almighty Maker and Governor of the world ; and had too great and venerating ideas of His adorable perfections to be capable of being an atheist, as Eliphaz had cruelly painted him (22 : 12-20), or of entering into a contest with such a formidable Being, as Bildad had injuriously represented Him. *Scott.*

Bildad in his short speech magnified the greatness of God and His purity, before which even the heavens are not clean. Job had heard all this before ; it did not touch the enigma of his life and of Providence. Hence, *first*, he pours out his sarcasm on Bildad's irrelevant statements (vs. 2-4). He knows God's greatness not less than Bildad, if knowledge of it only helped him in any way or had any bearing on the dispute, which was not concerning the greatness of God, but concerning His justice. And *second*, to show that he does not need to be taught concerning God's greatness, he proceeds to give a far more brilliant picture of it than Bildad had attempted, showing how it manifests itself ; in the underworld of the shades (vs. 5, 6) ; in the world above, the earth and heavens (vs. 7-13) ; ending with the sublime thought that, mighty and majestic as the oper-

ations of God are which are seen in these parts of the universe, they are but the fringes or outskirts of His ways, only a whisper in comparison to the full thunder of His power.

2-4. Job sarcastically expresses his admiration of Bildad's speech, and gratitude for the help it has been to him. A. B. D.—What powerful support hast Thou given to one (Job himself) who is deprived of all strength and wisdom ? *Rosenmüller.*—Dost Thou think me ignorant of these things, or canst Thou pretend to any extraordinary inspiration concerning them ? *Bishop Patrick.*

5. They that are deceased tremble. This rendering scarcely does justice to the original, though it is better than the Authorized Version, which is wholly without intelligible meaning. Other and more adequate versions are : *The shades are put to pain* (Delitzsch) ; *Where groan the giant shades* (T. Lewis) ; *There the shades are made to sorely tremble* (Ewald) ; *The shades tremble* (Conant). The word *rephso*, feebly rendered "dead things," means *the shades of the dead ; the departed spirits that dwell in Sheol*. (See Isa. 14 : 9.) These, because the place of Sheol was conceived to be under the earth, are designated those beneath the waters. *Curry.*—Bildad had spoken of God's dominion in heaven, Job shows that it reaches the dead ; the Hebrew word is *Rephaim*, the name of an extinct race of giants, but here and elsewhere applied to the shades (souls) of the departed. The dead sleep ; their shadowy forms rest in Sheol, under the ocean ; but God's will reaches them, rouses them in torture from their death-stillness below the depths of ocean peopled by monster forms. This statement coincides with many vague allusions to the conditions of the disembodied spirit, and it has a most fitting place in Job's discourse. His (God's) witness is on high, but His power reaches to the very abodes of darkness, and restores consciousness to the very shades of the departed.

6. Abaddon, the abyss of the bottomless pit ; the abode of destruction ; no mere abstraction or negation, but a region impenetrable save to God's eye.

7. The north. By the north we are probably to understand the firmament, extending, as the ancient Semites conceived, from the northern point indicated by the polar star, over the apparently empty space of our atmosphere. The words employed here and in other passages

of Holy Scripture do not convey the impression of substance or of metallic solidity, as is frequently asserted, but simply of expansion; they are vague, indefinite, just what they ought to be to express the impressions made upon an observant mind, careful not to substitute speculations for facts. *Cook.*

The word *north* here denotes the heavens as they appear to revolve around the pole, and which seem to be stretched out as a curtain. The heavens are often represented as a veil, an expanse, a curtain, or a tent. (See Isa. 34 : 4 ; 40 : 22.) *Upon nothing.* That is, without anything to support it. There is no certain evidence here that there then existed any conception of the globular form of the earth, with its diurnal and annual revolutions. But it is clear that it is regarded as not resting on any foundation or support; as lying on the vacant air, and kept there by the power of God. *Barnes.*—In respect to the real “foundations of the earth,” the Bible holds a truer language than science itself. The ultimate foundations, or supports, of the earth are God’s upholding power. T. L.

Empty space. Sir John Herschel has been sounding the heavens with his powerful telescope, and gauging the stars, and where do you think he finds the most barren part—the empty place—of the sky? In the north, precisely where Job told Bildad, the Shuhite, the empty place was stretched out. It is there where comets most delight to roam, and hide themselves in emptiness. *Mauray.*—How Job knew the truth, demonstrated by astronomy, that the earth hangs self-poised in empty space, is a question not easily solved by those who deny the inspiration of Holy Scripture. *Cook.*

8. He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. Sir Isaac Newton could not have more succinctly stated the position of the earth, nor could any of our meteorologists give fitter outline of our cloud system than this and similar descriptions embody. *W. Fraser.*—He binds up the waters and keeps them suspended in the clouds; through which they distil by drops to moisten the earth in due season. *Bishop Patrick.*—This verse comprehends the whole process of Almighty power in making the air, raising the watery vapors, condensing them into clouds, and sustaining them in that form so that their contents may not burst all at once upon the earth. *Scott.*—Notwithstanding the vast weight of water so raised and laid up, yet *the cloud is not rent un-*

der them, for then they would burst and pour out as a spout; but they distil through the cloud and so come drop by drop, in mercy to the earth, in small or great rain, as He pleases. H.

9. The deep vault of the heavens is referred to as God’s throne, which is spoken of as being closed in—*veiled*—by the cloud. *Curry.*—It is a beautiful poetical conception that the firmament not only reflects the splendor of God, but also veils His throne from human eyes. All nature may be regarded as a veil of Deity, “through whose mantling folds” he designs to show so much of His being as eye or heart can bear. *J. S. Burr.*—Heaven, or the sky, is styled in Scripture “the throne of God;” which “He shutteth up,” by spreading His clouds upon it. We are here presented with the same scene of nature which is described in chap. 36 : 32, “With clouds He covereth the light, and commandeth it not to shine, by the cloud that cometh betwixt.” This is the magnificent preparation and signal of Providence for the descent of fruitful showers on the thirsty ground. Psalm 147 : 8, “Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.” Cloud-assembling Jove is one of the lofty titles which Homer gives to the Supreme Being. *Scott.*

10. He hath described a boundary. The thought is carried over to the *waters* of the sea, which, according to the universal conception of antiquity, encircled the whole earth, and whose outer rim reached to *the confines of light and darkness*, where the two abutted upon each other. *Curry.*

11. The pillars of heaven tremble. When God shows Himself angry by sending thunder, tempests, and earthquakes, the very heavens seem to tremble, and the whole universe to be moved by these tokens of His displeasure. *Clark.*—The figurative expression, “the pillars of heaven,” seems intended to represent the heavens, under the idea of an immense fabric, supported on stately columns. Their “trembling” and “astonishment” is the animated style of sublime poetry, to denote violent concussions of the air, and agitation of the clouds. The cause is God’s “reproof”—that is, thunder, lightning, and tempestuous winds, which are represented by the heathen, as well as by sacred poets, as effects and tokens of God’s displeasure at the sins of men. *Scott.*

12. It may be the description of a tempest; and if the former part mean that God sometimes, by His power, raises a violent storm at

sea, the latter may be well enough understood of the pride or swelling of the sea itself, allayed again by the same Divine power and will that raised it. *Peters.*

13. For aught that appears, all space is populous with worlds ; for aught that appears, there never has been, and never will be, a moment without the presence in it of created worlds. The uncreated and indestructible amphitheatre of duration in which the stars run their courses, and the absence of which is inconceivable, is equally august and infinite with that of space, and equally unintelligible. They are twin mysteries—great cloudy homes, within whose coincident and sublime architectures dwell all other mysteries, all created nature, and even the Supernatural. *E. F. Burr.*

“The serpent” may mean an heavenly constellation, called *the great dragon* or *serpent* ; which being most eminent as taking up a considerable part of the northern hemisphere, may well be put for all the rest of the constellations or stars with which the heavens are garnished. Job knew the names of certain constellations, as appears from chaps. 9 : 9 and 38 : 31. *Poole.*

14. The power of God is illustrated in the mighty works described in vs. 5–13. Yet what we see of Him in these is but the ends, the outskirts of His real operations. And what we hear of Him is but as a faint whisper ; the thunder of the full unfolding of His power who can understand ? The nervous brevity and sublimity of these words are unsurpassable. A. B. D.

These are only “*parts of His ways.*” These nether regions of disembodied spirits, this great earth suspended “on nothing,” the oceans of waters that roll around and over its surface, the heavens crowded with innumerable globes of fiery brilliancy—He has to do with them all. He is not like the engineer that has finished the machine and left it, or the architect that has built the edifice and left it. He is in every part of the machinery He has constructed, in every part of the great house He has built. *D. Thomas.*—Every star must give up its secret before we have the complete manifestation of God, and even then we would see but “parts of His ways.” To compare and to study these

may be, must be, the work of eternity ; and, as we wonder sometimes how a soul, growing on forever, can find fresh exercise for all its thoughts and activities, we may reach the answer when we look up through the countless hosts of the firmament, and feel that every point of light shall yet open out into a sun, and each one cast its own special illumination on the nature of Him who, with all our searching, cannot be found out unto perfection. *Ker.*

His power. Though in a just idea of the Deity perhaps none of His attributes are predominant, yet to our imagination His power is by far the most striking. Some reflection, some comparison, is necessary to satisfy us of His wisdom, His justice, and His goodness. To be struck with His power, it is only necessary that we should open our eyes. And although a consideration of His other attributes may relieve in some measure our apprehensions, yet no conviction of the justice with which it is exercised, nor the mercy with which it is tempered, can wholly remove the terror that naturally arises from a force which nothing can withstand. If we rejoice, we rejoice with trembling ; and even while we are receiving benefits we cannot but shudder at a power which can confer benefits of such mighty importance. *Burke.*

It is the object of the sacred writer, in this chapter, to show the power and grandeur of God as seen in His works. The structure of the material universe and the processes of nature are represented as they appear to the eye, and by the impressions which they make on the common mind. So these subjects are everywhere treated in the Bible ; and the lessons thus given require no other knowledge of nature than what is apparent to every eye. Any other mode would not have answered the design of the Holy Scriptures, the religious and moral instruction of men in every stage of culture and knowledge. By this exhibition of the power and sovereignty of God, in nature and over all created intelligences, the way is prepared for the topics of the next two chapters. *Conant.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

- 1 AND Job again took up his parable, and said,
 2 As God liveth, who hath taken away my right ;
 And the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul ;
 3 (For my life is yet whole in me,
 And the spirit of God is in my nostrils ;)
 4 Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness,
 Neither shall my tongue utter deceit.
 5 God forbid that I should justify you :
 Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me.
 6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go :
 My heart shall not reproach *me* so long as I live.
 7 Let mine enemy be as the wicked,
 And let him that riseth up against me be as the unrighteous.
 8 For what is the hope of the godless, though he get him gain,
 When God taketh away his soul ?
 9 Will God hear his cry,
 When trouble cometh upon him ?
 10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty,
 And call upon God at all times ?
 11 I will teach you concerning the hand of God ;
 That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal.
- 12 Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it ;
 Why then are ye become altogether vain ?
 13 This is the portion of a wicked man with God,
 And the heritage of oppressors, which they receive from the Almighty.
 14 If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword ;
 And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.
 15 Those that remain of him shall be buried in death,
 And his widows shall make no lamentation.
 16 Though he heap up silver as the dust,
 And prepare raiment as the clay ;
 17 He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on,
 And the innocent shall divide the silver.
 18 He buildeth his house as the moth,
 And as a booth which the keeper maketh.
 19 He lieth down rich, but he shall not be gathered ;
 He openeth his eyes, and he is not.
 20 Terrors overtake him like waters ;
 A tempest stealeth him away in the night.
 21 The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth ;
 And it sweepeth him out of his place.
 22 For *God* shall hurl at him, and not spare :
 He would fain flee out of his hand.
 23 Men shall clap their hands at him,
 And shall hiss him out of his place.

CHAP. 27 consists of two main parts : First (vs. 1-6), a solemn protestation before God by Job of his innocence ; And second (vs. 7-23), a picture of the condition of the wicked man, in two divisions, his dreary and desolate condition of mind, having no hope in God, when death or afflictions overtake him (vs. 7-10) ; and the terrible external destruction that befalls him at the hand of God (vs. 11-23). A. B. D.—Under this second part he declares fully and plainly what he really believes touching the principles of God's providential government ; and directly repudiates the argument which he had previously urged, both as a real matter of trouble and perplexity to himself and as a conclusive answer to his opponent's charges. He does not even now assert that the righteous man will necessarily be prosperous, a statement which he could not reconcile with the facts of his own experience ; but he states that the real portion

of the wicked, that which is reserved for one and all as their heritage, is final and complete extermination ; his children will be cut off, his wealth be the sport of the innocent, his house overthrown, his life filled with incessant terrors and ended by a storm, his memory accursed. Vigorously as Job had maintained the proposition which he here recalls, it is evident throughout that the conviction of God's righteousness lay far deeper ; the current of thought which carried him away was but superficial, and yields to the mighty tide of feeling, when the depths of his heart are brought into motion. He was naturally unwilling to leave the question, which he here disposes of, on so unsatisfactory a footing. Job, doubtless, shared the universal conviction that notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, which are quite sufficient to put a stop to uncharitable judgments and applications to individual cases, God

judges the wicked even in this life, and sooner or later awards to each his portion. *Cook.*

2. To what Job has yet to say, which may be regarded as a summary of his views and life, he prefixes the most solemn form of the Hebrew oath, "As God liveth." So sure is he of the integrity that the friends have so attacked, and of his true interpretation of God's workings. J. F. G.—Hitherto Job has used no oath; now for the first time he swears by the living God, his "Witness" and "Redeemer." This oath expresses his faith and also his conviction that his judgment is not as yet complete; "God hath taken it away" is an expression carefully chosen to imply "withholding" not "perversion." Job thus, as throughout this discourse, corrects his former assertions; he holds fast the conviction that his afflictions are not a punishment due for his offences, but he no longer charges God with injustice; even for that expression which he still uses, modified as it is, he suggests an excuse in the pardonable bitterness of a soul filled with anguish. *Cook.*

3. According to most modern expositors we take v. 3 as a parenthetical confirmatory clause, by which Job gives the ground of his solemn affirmation that he is still in possession of his full consciousness, and cannot help feeling and expressing the contradiction between his lot of suffering which brands him as an evil-doer, and his moral integrity. D.

5, 6. He summons Jehovah to attest his integrity. He will not be guilty of the iniquity and deceit of admitting that he is guilty when he knows himself to be innocent. Job thus fulfils God's declaration in the second chapter. "Still he holdeth fast his integrity." V.—Good and holy men in Scripture do everywhere, with great confidence and assurance, appeal to God concerning the integrity and sincerity of their hearts toward Him. It would not be modesty, but impudence, in any man to declare that he suspects himself of hypocrisy; good men have always abhorred the thought of it. This was a brave and generous speech of Job. After he had lost all, and he had a great deal to lose; when he was forsaken of all other comfort, even the charitable opinion of his best friends concerning his sincerity; what was it that bore up his spirit? nothing but the conscience of his own integrity. With what resolution and constancy of mind he asserts and maintains it. *Archbishop Tillotson.*

8-10. The mention of the wicked (v. 7) gives occasion to introduce the subject again, and to settle it according to the insight of truth. Against their intemperate and one-sided por-

traysals he has already answered negatively, what the fate of the wicked is *not*; now, free from the heat of controversy, he will give his view of what their fate *is*. J. F. G.—The comfortless state of the ungodly man, who has no trust in God, is described in three conditions of his history: First, when he is at the moment of death, when God "cutteth him off" and "draweth out his soul" (v. 8); second, when calamity overtakes him (v. 9); and in general, in his whole life (v. 10). A. B. D.

What is the hope? This is the key-note of Job's portrayal of the wicked; they have no hope, no abiding future; the permanency of things is not theirs. Job can see this clearly now, having conquered his way by faith to a hope beyond this life. J. F. G.—The ungodly man, says Job, has no God to hear his cry in distress. He cannot find any consolation in God. "What can the impious hope for though he get him gain, when God taketh away his soul?" The word "gain" is literally *unlawful* gain, implying that such is the character of *all* the gain of the wicked; and the word "taketh away" is literally "draw out," like a sword from its scabbard—a vivid image of God stripping the soul from its body as a sword is drawn out of its sheath. We see here how deeply the thought of the future retributive life has entered into Job's mind. If there be no such life how could there be any question of what a man may hope for when God requires his soul? Even the godless man may look forward to something there. V.

9, 10. Though God gives temporal blessings to the ungodly, there is still a fatal separation between Him and them. God is not near to them, to answer their cry in times of trouble, nor do they find their hearts turning toward Him in joyful confidence. *Curry.*—They are not anchored to God; all is precarious, unsafe, unstable. Besides, whatever else they gain, the blessing paramount, that which alone, whether now or hereafter, gives value to life—namely, delight in God and sweet dependence on His will, they miss entirely; it is to them a thing non-existent. These words furnish an expressive indication of the pure standard of Job's righteousness; it is not merely service for reward, but delight in God, unselfish devotion to God for His own sake. The friends' conception has been distinctly lower than this; and it is this that Job has maintained against Satan's sneer of the beginning. And now Job's conception of wickedness is just its opposite. To him nothing can be more deplorable than not to delight in God. J. F. G.

In comparing himself with the "ungodly," Job is conscious that he has a God who does not leave him unheard, in whom He delights Himself, and to whom He can at all times draw near. D.—It is manifest that in these verses the speaker means to contrast his own condition of mind with that of the godless man. He has hope in God, in death and in trouble, for he delighteth himself in God at all times. A. B. D.—To the ungodly there shall be neither the hearing of his prayers nor a joyful, trustful, and loving fellowship with God. Job claims for himself both these things (13:16), and thereby leaves out of the account transient obscurations of his spirit, like that in which he mourns (19:7) that his prayer is not heard. Zöckler.—Job felt that God *did* hear his cry, though he could get no answer.

10. Will he delight. Job therefore delighted in the Almighty his punisher. "Always call," he would therefore pray without ceasing; note the extreme beauty and delicacy of the term by which Job thus unconsciously, as it would seem, bears witness to his own inward faith, hope, and piety. Cook.

Will he always call upon God? Every one that knows him can make the answer for him, "No, he will not;" especially in secret, where none but God's eye can behold him. Upon some extraordinary occasions, in extraordinary cases, he may seem very devout; but he is modest, he will not trouble God too far, nor too often. He will serve God only by fits and starts, when he himself lists. He never troubles God but when God troubles him. In health, wealth, peace he can comfort himself. He never prays but in trouble; in his affliction he will seek God. God is fain to go away and return to His place, else this man would never look after him. When God hath touched him he acquaints God with his misery, but when times grow better with him he excludes God from his mirth. Crook.

11. This verse is of great importance. It implies that Job is now going to state exactly what he believes touching the hand of God, *i.e.*, the true character of the Divine dispensation. He will not conceal what is with the Almighty, the principle which he is assured must be present to the mind of God. This prepares us for a modification of statements which had been wrung from him, when his words flowed over from a spirit drunk with the poison of God's arrows.

12. They, like him, knew the facts, which he is now about to state, but they misapplied them altogether when, having no cause what-

ever to suspect Job's integrity, they represented his sufferings as proofs of guilt. Given two facts, God's wrath against sin, and Job's piety, proved by a life of consistent godliness, the only inference which they ought to have drawn from the aspect of his misery was that God's judgments are unsearchable, and that sooner or later His "righteous servant" would be justified. Cook.

13. He now admits that in human experience there *are* tokens of that law of retribution which he had called in question; that *ultimately* the wicked do not thrive and the righteous do. His whole view of the case is tinged by his thought of a future life. To be wicked is to be miserable, not *here* perhaps, but *at last*. V.—Job's portrayal, here beginning, is an exposition in poetic language of what we call the logic of events. It is the truth that only righteousness is well-built and permanent; the logic of wickedness is decay and destruction. Violence begets and succumbs to violence; being itself a tearing-down, it has no future to count upon. To this idea is naturally reducible all that Job here says, and all that is true in what the friends have said. J. F. G.

13-23. We have Job's final and formal statement of the doom and heritage of the wicked. It is a doom from God; a heritage to be received from the Almighty. He shall lose what he has unjustly gathered with so much care. Though he escape for a time, he shall get his reward in due course. V.

19-23. Most terrible is the description, introduced in v. 19, of the overthrow of the sinner himself (vs. 20-23); sudden mortal terror overtaketh him like an overwhelming flood; or rather, a swift tempest from the east taketh him up and carrieth him away with an irresistible force, so that before it, as before the missiles of a strong armed warrior, he can do nothing else than flee, for in this storm the Divine power is hidden, so he flees accordingly, still pursued by the scorn and ridicule of his own place, which ought to protect him. Ewald.—To sum up all, both God and man are against the evil-doer. God casts evils upon him and makes escape impossible, and men clap their hands and hiss him out of his place. This is an awful description, and in it Job has equalled if not surpassed the friends. V.

Sin promiseth gold, and pays with dross; it promiseth bread, and pays with stones; it promiseth honor, and pays with disgrace; it promiseth a paradise, and payeth with a wilderness; it promiseth liberty, and payeth with bondage; in a word, it promiseth all manner of content,

and pays us with utter disappointment and dissatisfaction. Every step in sin is a step to misery ; and the farther any man proceedeth on in sin, the farther he wanders from God, and the farther he wanders from God the nearer he comes to misery. Every motion toward sin is a hasting into the arms and embrace of death.

Caryl.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

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| <p>1 SURELY there is a mine for silver,
And a place for gold which they refine.</p> <p>2 Iron is taken out of the earth,
And brass is molten out of the stone.</p> <p>3 <i>Man</i> setteth an end to darkness,
And searcheth out to the furthest bound
The stones of thick darkness and of the
shadow of death.</p> <p>4 He breaketh open a shaft away from where
men sojourn ;
They are forgotten of the foot ;
They hang afar from men, they swing to
and fro.</p> <p>5 As for the earth, out of it cometh bread :
And underneath it is turned up as it were
by fire.</p> <p>6 The stones thereof are the place of sapphires,
And it hath dust of gold.</p> <p>7 That path no bird of prey knoweth,
Neither hath the falcon's eye seen it :</p> <p>8 The proud beasts have not trodden it,
Nor hath the fierce lion passed thereby.</p> <p>9 He putteth forth his hand upon the flinty
rock ;
He overturneth the mountains by the roots.</p> <p>10 He cutteth out channels among the rocks ;
And his eye seeth every precious thing.</p> <p>11 He bindeth the streams that they trickle not ;
And the thing that is hid bringeth he forth
to light.</p> <p>12 But where shall wisdom be found ?
And where is the place of understanding ?</p> <p>13 Man knoweth not the price thereof ;
Neither is it found in the land of the living.</p> <p>14 The deep saith, It is not in me :</p> | <p>And the sea saith, It is not with me.</p> <p>15 It cannot be gotten for gold,
Neither shall silver be weighed for the price
thereof.</p> <p>16 It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir,
With the precious onyx, or the sapphire.</p> <p>17 Gold and glass cannot equal it :
Neither shall it be exchanged for jewels of
fine gold.</p> <p>18 No mention shall be made of coral or of
crystal :
Yea, the price of wisdom is above rubies.</p> <p>19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it,
Neither shall it be valued with pure gold.</p> <p>20 Whence then cometh wisdom ?
And where is the place of understanding ?</p> <p>21 Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living,
And kept close from the fowls of the air.</p> <p>22 Destruction and Death say,
We have heard a rumour thereof with our
ears.</p> <p>23 God understandeth the way thereof,
And he knoweth the place thereof.</p> <p>24 For he looketh to the ends of the earth,
And seeth under the whole heaven ;</p> <p>25 To make a weight for the wind ;
Yea, he meteth out the waters by measure.</p> <p>26 When he made a decree for the rain,
And a way for the lightning of the thunder :</p> <p>27 Then did he see it, and declare it ;
He established it, yea, and searched it out.</p> <p>28 And unto man he said,
Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wis-
dom ;
And to depart from evil is understanding.</p> |
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HAVING portrayed the extreme of unwisdom (with which in the old philosophy wickedness was identified), the life that has not the future nor is built therefor, it is natural that Job should next speak of its contrast, the true wisdom and foresight whereby to build human life and character. There are many marvellous things that man may know or search out ; but many also are unsearchable. He cannot see as God sees, perhaps cannot reach absolute truth.

But there is a wisdom *for him*, which points to the absolute good as the needle points to the pole. J. F. G.—In this chapter Job turns to the great principle, which, once thoroughly accepted, shows the futility of all speculations touching apparent difficulties or inequalities in God's government. Man has marvellous faculties ; in the investigation of physical phenomena, in his mastery over external nature, his powers are indefinite, his tact sure, his achieve-

ments a matter of rational admiration ; but as for understanding which can penetrate God's secrets and comprehend His ways, man knoweth it not, it is not found in the place of the living. Wisdom, in that sense, belongs to God ; it is His alone ; all the wisdom and understanding of man is summed up in the fear of God and in the hatred of sin. With this declaration Job disposes of the whole argument ; he does not profess to account for his own sufferings, or for any inexplicable events in the world's history ; such attempts do but savor of presumption, their failure causes inconceivable scandal ; one thing is sure, that he who fears God and departs from evil hath the true secret of life and eternity. In the three following chapters Job takes a review of his whole life, as though he would settle the question of his innocence once and forever ; the conclusion is, that he holds fast to his integrity, but remains in a state of absolute perplexity touching the cause of his terrible sufferings, which he describes in the thirtieth chapter. *Cook.*

The inequalities of human conditions, the success of wickedness, the sorrows of good men, the removal of those who apparently could least be spared, the survival of others who are a burden or perhaps a curse, the failure of enterprises wholly benevolent, the seemingly capricious ebb and flow of civilization in different ages and lands, the vicissitudes and disappointments of individuals and communities—these, and many like features of human life, baffle all attempts to account for them under the government of a wise and sovereign Ruler. Numerous philosophical systems have been propounded as solutions of the problem ; but all have failed. Reasonable persons must admit that there is a Divine order in the universe. The world is not the sport of chance, nor the passive victim of unintelligent and inexorable fate, and still less is it subject to a Ruler who is indeed almighty, but neither wise nor holy. No, there is a principle of administration which, did we but know it, would reconcile all contradictions and illumine all mysteries. But we do not, cannot know it. Our faculties fail to take it in. Yet we are not left helpless, but have all that we really need for the conduct of life and the attainment of life's great end. This is the sum of what is contained in the brilliant twenty-eighth chapter of the Book of Job. *Chambers.*—The secret that resolves all mysteries, harmonizes all strifes, reconciles all contradictions, and reduces this seemingly inextricable confusion to perfect symmetry and order, is hidden in the infinite mind alone. But the

Most High has revealed to man all that is necessary for his practical guidance. He may not know how God governs the world, or what rules He prescribes for His own procedure ; but he has been sufficiently taught how to direct his own conduct and to govern his own life. He cannot solve the mysteries of Providence ; but he need be in no doubt how to accomplish the true end of his own being and to secure his own highest welfare. “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding.” W. H. G.

Analysis of Chapter. Wisdom can nowhere be found by man ; God alone is in possession of it ; the wisdom of man is to fear the Lord. The thought that wisdom cannot be reached by man is set forth and illustrated in many ways and with much poetical adornment. First (vs. 1-14), the precious ores and stones *have* a place where they may be found, to which men penetrate and from which they bring them forth to the light ; but wisdom has no place where it can be found in all the land of the living. Second (vs. 15-22), wisdom is not to be seen in the marts of mankind ; it cannot be purchased though gold and all precious things were offered for it. It is not found even in the world below, the realm of the dead. Third (vs. 23-28), God alone knoweth the way to it and is in possession of it, for He is the Creator of the world. The wisdom of man is the fear of the Lord. A. B. D.

1-11. Here Job shows what a great way the wit of man may go, in diving into the depths of nature and seizing the riches of it ; what a great deal of knowledge and wealth men may, by their ingenious and industrious searches, make themselves masters of. But does it therefore follow that men may, by their wit, comprehend the reasons why some wicked people prosper and others are punished, why some good people prosper and others are afflicted ? No, by no means. H.—These verses are remarkable for the knowledge of mining operations which they indicate in the writer. Though many expressions are still obscure, and will probably remain matters of controversy, we find in them singularly accurate and graphic descriptions of the processes of miners. It is an interesting question where the writer could have acquired such minute and accurate knowledge ; certainly not in Palestine, where mining was unknown. But in very remote ages, far more ancient than that assigned to Job, there were gold mines in Egypt ; silver was brought from the far east by Phœnician merchants ; iron was found, and copper mines were worked in the Sinaitic peninsula by Egyptians from the

third dynasty, at least some thousand years before Job, until the nineteenth dynasty. *Cook.*

1. Modern science instead of confuting only confirms the aphorism of the patriarch Job, who has shadowed forth the downward persistence of the one (silver), and the superficial distribution of the other (gold). "Surely there is a vein for the silver—the earth bath dust of gold." The indisputable fact is that the chief quantities of gold originally embedded in the upper portions of the vein have been broken up and transported, with the débris of the mountain-tops, into adjacent slopes and valleys. Silver and argentiferous lead, on the contrary, extended so largely downward into the bowels of the earth, that they must yield enormous profit to the miner for ages to come. *Murchison.*

1, 2. The statements seem purposely indefinite; the things predicated belong to both silver and gold—both have a place in the mine, and also in the refinery. Iron is also taken from the earth, and brass or copper is obtained from stone by *melting*, or, in the language of the art, by *smelting*. These are simply matter-of-fact statements as to how these metals are obtained.

6. Both of the statements of this verse are well-known facts of mineralogy and mining. Crystals lie embodied in the rocks, and also gold in particles, or flakes, or nuggets. *Curry.*—**And it hath dust of gold;** or, *and dust of gold is for him*, for the miner. The great riches which reward the toils and talents of the miners, are contrasted with the empty results of speculation about the hidden things of God's government.

7, 8. Or, *a path which the eagle knoweth not, and the eye of the vulture hath not espied it.* In the next clause, read "the fierce beasts," literally, "the sons of pride or fierceness." The mine is a path which none but man could discern. The ingenuity of man is thus contrasted with the instinctive sagacity of animals, the far-reaching and keen vision of the eagle and hawk, the strength and force of the lion. The astonishment and admiration excited by the natural powers of the brute creation are especially noticeable in the monuments of Egypt. Job shows how far more wonderful and admirable are the faculties of man.

9. The rock. The word so translated means "granite" or "quartz." Job evidently alludes to excavations in the granitic and porphyritic rocks; the expression, "putteth forth his hand," denotes the severe and continued exertions required to penetrate the rock. **Over-**

turneth. By fire. Pliny describes various processes of blasting. *Cook.*—The operation described here, seems to be the breaking in pieces and dislodging, in order to come at the ore, the hardest flint or marble; which are the roots—that is, the foundation of the mountain. *Scott.*

10. Channels. To drain the mine, a process of great labor and danger in the infancy of hydraulic science, yet familiar to the Egyptians from the earliest times.

11. Trickle not. The miner not only turns the course of subterranean rivers which he meets in his excavation, but prevents the least leakage, or "weeping," a picturesque and perhaps technical term. **Forth to light.** The last grand result, the hidden treasures are brought into the light for the use and glory of man. *Cook.*—The metal that was hid in the ore is refined from its dross and brought forth pure out of the furnace; and then he thinks his pains well bestowed. Go to the miners, then, thou sluggard in religion, consider their ways and be wise. Let their courage, diligence, and constancy in seeking the wealth that perisheth, shame us out of slothfulness and faint-heartedness in laboring for the true riches. **H.**

12-19. The precious ores and costly stones, though hidden, have a place where they may be found, and man knows how to reach it and bring that which is hid to light; but where can wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? It has no place, and is unattainable by man; it is not to be found in the land of the living, in the deep, nor in the sea. **A. B. D.**—Job points out that there is absolutely no relation between the results of human ingenuity and true wisdom, they are utterly incommensurable. Man may traverse the habitable earth, explore the depths of the ocean, sail over all seas, possess all that the diver, the miner has collected, and the merchant transported from India to Ethiopia, but he acquires nothing which he can exchange for wisdom. This is no mere truism. Wisdom and the acquisition of wealth are inseparable in the minds of most men; when that acquisition involves the discipline and development of high moral and intellectual faculties, it has a claim readily conceded to it by the leaders of human thought. Job, doubtless, taught a truth new and strange, and likely to be contested by many of his contemporaries. *Cook.*

13-14. The whole realm of nature is exhausted. Man can find every precious material thing, but wisdom eludes his sharpest scrutiny. The most difficult material labors he performs

with ease. Neither height nor depth, neither land nor sea, perplex him. Only let him know where anything of value is, and he will find or make a way to it. The fertility of his invention respecting such matters is something marvellous. But it utterly fails when applied to the effort to ascertain the moral order of the world. *Chambers.*

15-19. As the preceding verses (1-14) expressed the idea that there was no "place" of wisdom where men could find it and from which they could bring it forth, these verses express the idea that it can be acquired by no price which men can offer for it. It is altogether unattainable. Vs. 20-22 declare this explicitly. A. B. D.

16. It is doubtful what gem is meant by that which we translate the onyx; the epithet *precious*, as Schultens remarks, gives a distinction to it, which the onyx, a sort of agate, does not merit. The Chaldee interpreter renders it beryls. The beryl of the ancients was a transparent gem of a sea-green color. The sapphire is of a beautiful sky blue. Some will have the Hebrew word to signify the *ruby*; others the *carbuncle*, which is a stone of the ruby kind, very rare, and of a rich, glowing blood color. *Scott.*

20-22. Whence then cometh wisdom. The declared failure of the quest through all the world suggests this inquiry. It is too precious to be foregone, and yet a search over the whole world and into its most secret recesses fails to discover it. Another realm, the unseen underworld, is next questioned, and Destruction (Abaddon, the Destroyer) and Death, the custodian of those dark domains, respond that they have heard of it, but only in unintelligible rumors—they cannot tell what it is nor where it may be found. *Curry.*

22. By a grand personification Job summons the abyss (Abaddon) and Death to bear witness. They have heard a rumor. Perhaps Job felt that some dim intimation of the great truth reached "the spirits of the departed even in their state of imperfect consciousness," but the thought is vague and dimly expressed. It may be that he simply means that the dead and the living are equally incapable of comprehending the wisdom of God. *Cook.*—The words "we have heard the report thereof" ascribe neither a less nor a greater knowledge of wisdom to Death than the living possess. Both are equally ignorant of it, and equally without it. As vs. 13, 14 told how wisdom was nowhere to be found in the upper world, so v. 22 states that it is not to be found in the underworld. The process of exhaustion is complete; wisdom is

nowhere to be found; neither in the earth nor in the sea, neither in the land of the living nor in the place of the dead.

23-27. Wisdom in this passage, as in other parts of Scripture where it is spoken of, is properly the *idea* or conception lying behind or under the fixed order of the universe, the world-plan. This fixed order itself, with all its phenomena and occurrences, is nothing but God fulfilling Himself in many ways, but these ways may be reduced to one conception, and this is wisdom, which is thus conceived as a thing having an objective existence of its own. Naturally such an objective thing is apt to be personified, and may be "seen," "established," "searched out," and the like. In the same way the question may be put, Where is wisdom to be found? and the answer given that it can be found nowhere. This question and answer merely mean that man cannot attain to *intellectual* apprehension of the idea of the universe, nor understand the principle underlying the phenomena and events of the world and human life. This wisdom can nowhere be found either by man or by any creature (v. 21), only by the Creator. *God* knoweth the place of it and is in possession of it, for He is the maker and upholder of the universe with all its agencies. And He has assigned to man as *his* wisdom the fear of the Lord (v. 28). A. B. D.

23. As for wisdom, "God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof." The seat of wisdom is, was, and ever has been, the bosom of God. It is He and He only before whose comprehensive gaze all worlds are spread out; the world of nature in all the richness of its variety, the world of providence in all the intricacies of its counsels, the world of grace in all the profoundness of its depths. The subtlest powers of nature are His creation, and under His control. The deep designs which regulate the administration of events are the offspring of His mind. The great works of grace, redemption, sanctification, glorification, are all the result of His immediate agency. E. M. G.

24. This does not mean merely that He is omniscient, but that, as Creator, He has universal oversight of the work of His hands. All sprang from Him, and is, therefore, under His inspection and control. This is illustrated by two examples set forth in vs. 25, 26. *Chambers.*—The winds and "waters" are examples taken to represent all of the agencies and forces of creation. These were and continue all weighed and measured, adjusted and directed by God. A. B. D.

25. In the still atmosphere there slumbers amazing power ; it has a weight, or substantiality, by which it upholds the clouds or the waters ; and there is in its movements a force which is appalling when in tempest it rushes hither and thither, distributing desolation and death. In that silent process by which the clouds are uplifted, there is put forth in a single year a weight or an amount of force that is almost incredible ; it has been calculated by Arago as greater than the united strength of all the nations of the earth if put forth for twenty thousand years. *W. Fraser.*

Nothing sensible is to us more unaccountable than the wind ; but God gives it out by weight, wisely ordering both from what point it shall blow and with what strength. The waters of the sea and the rain waters He both weighs and measures ; allotting the proportion of every tide and every shower. A great and constant communication there is between clouds and seas, the waters above the firmament and those under it ; vapors go up, rains come down, air is condensed into water, water rarefied into air ; but the great God keeps an exact account of all the stock with which this trade is carried on for the public benefit, and sees that none of it be lost. Now if in these things Providence be so exact, how much more in dispensing frowns and favors, rewards and punishments to the children of men according to the rules of equity ! *H.*

28. And unto man He said. This ordinance in regard to man is also considered contemporary with creation ; then God saw and searched out wisdom, and at the same time, as suitable to man's place, He ordained for him *his* wisdom, which is the fear of the Lord and to depart from evil. The wisdom spoken of throughout the chapter is a possession of God alone ; it is His who is Creator ; man has a wisdom also, which is that of the creature, to fear the Lord. *A. B. D.*

It is to be remarked that Job thus unconsciously sets the seal upon his own triumph. His character is described by God Himself (chap. 1) as "one that feareth God and departeth from evil." The Hebrew has the same word in both places. *Cook.*

These are just what Job started with (chap. 1), but they have reached a significance far beyond what they had then. He has tested and maintained them through the fiercest fires of struggle and affliction ; and not only has he proved them true, but he has defined as never before *what it involves* to fear God and shun evil—even all that Satan doubted of him. Fur-

ther, that very integrity has been to Job for insight into the deeps of things ; the faith that was born of his loyalty to what was holy and loving has indeed proved itself "understanding." This, then, is the highest expression of Job's vindication. Thus Job, the man perfect and upright, who feared God and shunned evil, has not only answered Satan's question, but solved for every man the problem of life. His solution is not new, nor does it contradict the wise precepts of the friends. And yet it *is* new ; for it comes now with a whole world of fact and experience behind it, reporting that in the most searching trial this rule of life has stood the test. To fear God and shun evil is wisdom, in spite of the affliction that righteousness suffers, in spite of the prospered wickedness that is rampant in the world. And in the deepest sense, too, the solution *does* contradict, if not the friends' words, yet the friends' whole false attitude toward God ; for with Job to fear God and shun evil is not to fear and shun appearances, or to trim the sails according to the way in which the breeze of God's favor seems for the time to set ; it is to be true to the soul's ideal of the godlike in scorn of consequence. They say Job was impatient. If patience means holding one consistent mind through a hard experience, and if patience has her perfect work in believing and enduring, *was* he impatient ? *J. F. G.*

The fear of the Lord. Higher than all knowledge of natural things is that which has God Himself for its object, and which defines man's relations to Him. Everywhere in His self-manifestation God is teaching man what are his spiritual relations toward his Maker and Keeper ; and the disposition of mind in which man must apprehend God is expressed by the word fear. The idea of the apprehension of danger, though not wholly wanting, is subordinated to higher and better sentiments, including faith and trust warmed and elevated into love and active devotion, with a corresponding repulsion from all moral evil. *Curry.*—The *fear of the Lord* is the spring and summary of all religion. There is a slavish fear of God springing from hard thoughts of Him, which is contrary to religion (Matt. 23 : 24). There is a selfish fear of God springing from dreadful thoughts of Him, which may be a good step toward religion (Acts 9 : 5). But there is a filial fear of God springing from great and high thoughts of Him, which is the life and soul of all religion. And wherever this reigns in the heart it will appear by a constant care *to depart from evil* (Prov. 16 : 6). This is essential to re-

ligion ; we must first cease to do evil or we shall never learn to do well. H.

Instead of the solution of the problem of the universe, God has given to man what is far better, the guiding principle of life, the key to usefulness and happiness.

“ And unto man He said,
Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ;
And to depart from evil is understanding.”

What a world of significance lies in these lines ! “ The fear,” not of the deist’s God, not of the agnostic’s force, not of any humanly invented Deity, but “ of the Lord”—Jehovah, the eternal and self-existent One, who has made Himself known to men, not only by His works, but also by His Word, the revealed God of the Scriptures. For this Being man is to cherish fear, not terror, but reverence, the happy compound of submission and fear, such as is expressed in the address of the Lord’s Prayer which unites the tenderness of a father with the majesty of one enthroned in heaven, or in the preface to the Decalogue, where we are taught to feel awe toward the Creator as Jehovah our God, and at the same time grateful love to Him as the one who brought us out of the house of bondage. This is religion, the bond which unites with the unseen and eternal, the principle which introduces the supernatural into the sphere of the natural, the mighty spiritual force which alone can supply the needs of the human soul. Properly understood, the fear of the Lord covers the whole sphere of human life, and takes in every relation that man can hold.

And to depart from evil is understanding. The negative form of the statement is owing, doubtless, to the character of man as sinful and fallen. Prone as he is by nature and practice to follow that which is evil, naturally the precept to him takes the prohibitory form found in the Decalogue. To depart from evil, is to revolutionize a man’s whole course and character. It takes in thought, word, and deed. It comprehends all relations—domestic, social, civil, and ecclesiastical. It extends from the dawn of conscious moral agency to the last expiring breath. Nor is it possible to depart from evil without in the very act following that which is good, and so fulfilling one’s whole duty. *Chambers.*

The world gives the name of wisdom to many higher and lower manifestations of intellectual foresight and practical sense, but Scripture sees in it nothing save one single law of life : “ The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding.” Some one may

say, Is any knowledge worth the attainment save the one knowledge which is wisdom ? The answer is, To the true Christian every school will be a school of Christ. On the ample leaf of knowledge, whether it be rich with the secrets of nature or with the spoils of time, we will read no name save the name of God. To seek for knowledge where it is possible is the clear duty of man ; to win it is the gift of God. Knowledge apart from wisdom is like a vestibule dis severed from its temple, but it may, on the other hand, be the worthy vestibule of that sacred shrine. Knowledge is a vain thing only when it is sought out of unworthy motives and applied to selfish ends ; but it becomes noble and glorious when it is desired solely for man’s benefit and consecrated wholly to God’s praise. *Farrar.*

Our faith is more precious in His eyes than our knowledge. By being left unacquainted with the secrets of the Divine wisdom in some things, we are in the better position for glorifying His wisdom in all things. If we cannot see the reason of His doings we are yet enabled, from what we do know, to conclude that the Lord is holy in all His ways, and righteous in all His works ; and in this confidence can rest content, happy, waiting in the posture that best becomes a believer, and which honors Him more than any amount of knowledge of His high secrets which He could bestow upon us. We know the whole counsel of God concerning faith and repentance ; concerning eternal life, and the way into it ; concerning the whole mystery of Christ crucified. All this—all that concerns our salvation, has been made open and plain to us. Is not this enough ? *Kitto.*

In the Book of Job mention is made of kings, princes, nobles, judges, merchants, warriors, travellers, and slaves. The pen of iron had begun to engrave inscriptions upon rocks : the mining shaft was sunk for gold and silver ; and palaces that had been built for kings and nobles had fallen into ruin. Astronomy had begun to acquaint men with the heavenly bodies, and many of the stars and constellations had received well-known names. Altogether, the state of civilization was highly advanced. The more closely we study those early times, the more erroneous appears the opinion, that man began his career as a savage, and gradually worked his way up to refinement and civilization. The reverse of this is nearer the truth. “ God made man upright”—civilized and refined, as well as intelligent and holy ; but as man departed from God, he lost these early

blessings. Sometimes a considerable degree of refinement has been reached by other paths ; but by far the richest and best civilization is that which has come with true religion—with the pure knowledge and simple worship of the one true God. W. G. B.

CHAPTER XXIX.

1 AND Job again took up his parable, and said,
 2 Oh that I were as in the months of old,
 As in the days when God watched over me ;
 3 When his lamp shined upon my head,
 And by his light I walked through darkness ;
 4 As I was in the ripeness of my days,
 When the secret of God was upon my tent ;
 5 When the Almighty was yet with me,
 And my children were about me ;
 6 When my steps were washed with butter,
 And the rock poured me out streams of oil !
 7 When I went forth to the gate unto the city,
 When I prepared my seat in the street,
 8 The young men saw me and hid themselves,
 And the aged rose up and stood ;
 9 The princes refrained talking,
 And laid their hand on their mouth ;
 10 The voice of the nobles was hushed,
 And their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.
 11 For when the ear heard *me*, then it blessed me ;
 And when the eye saw *me*, it gave witness unto me :
 12 Because I delivered the poor that cried,
 The fatherless also, that had none to help him.
 13 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me :

And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
 14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me :
 My justice was as a robe and a diadem.
 15 I was eyes to the blind,
 And feet was I to the lame.
 16 I was a father to the needy :
 And the cause of him that I knew not I searched out.
 17 And I brake the jaws of the unrighteous,
 And plucked the prey out of his teeth.
 18 Then I said, I shall die in my nest,
 And I shall multiply my days as the sand :
 19 My root is spread out to the waters,
 And the dew lieth all night upon my branch :
 20 My glory is fresh in me,
 And my bow is renewed in my hand.
 21 Unto me men gave ear, and waited,
 And kept silence for my counsel.
 22 After my words they spake not again ;
 And my speech dropped upon them.
 23 And they waited for me as for the rain ;
 And they opened their mouth wide *as for* the latter rain.
 24 I laughed on them, when they had no confidence,
 And the light of my countenance they cast not down.
 25 I chose out their way, and sat *as* chief,
 And dwelt as a king in the army,
 As one that comforteth the mourners.

CHAPS. XXIX.-XXXI

JOB having declared fully the principles by which he is guided in his consideration of God's government, reverts to a pathetic description of his present misery contrasted with his former happiness. The style of the rest of his discourse differs somewhat from that of the preceding portions ; while it is equally conspicuous for power, conciseness, beauty, and copiousness of illustration, it is clearer, and flows in a more equable and limpid current ; it is as though the storm-clouds are broken, and things stand out in their true light and just proportions, now that the struggles of contending emo-

tions are passing away. Job does not, indeed, and cannot, comprehend the cause of his calamities, or reconcile them with what he could conjecture of the Almighty by whose hand they are inflicted ; but he sees them as they are ; the present and the past are before him ; and though he cannot formally express a hope, for which he has no sure objective grounds, yet the tone of his pleading with God indicates a deep under-current of pious feeling, while the complete and exhaustive examination of a life which has been passed in the faithful discharge of duty and in abstinence from all forms of wilful sin, cannot but impart some comfort and suggest some hope, or at least some prepara-

tion for hope to a conscience singularly free from offence. *Cook.*

Chaps. 29-31. Job takes a comprehensive survey of his mysterious history as a whole. First, looking back with pathetic regret upon his former days, when his children were about him and he was prosperous and honored among men (chap. 29); second, contrasting with this happier past his present abasement, the contempt in which he is held by the lowest of mankind, and the mysterious afflictions of God upon him (chap. 30); and third, protesting that this affliction had come upon him for no sin of which he had been guilty; and ending with the impassioned cry that God would make known to him the charge which He has against him (chap. 31). A. B. D.

Chap. 29. In chap. 28 Job's thought of God's ineffable wisdom came from the contemplation of his own mysterious sufferings, bringing him to the grand conclusion, that it is man's wisdom to believe and adore when he cannot understand. This high train of thought carries him for a season out of and above himself. Such a pitch, however, cannot be sustained, and so he comes down again to his own sorrows, his ever smarting pains, and that leads to the contemplation of former happiness, which the same unsearchable wisdom had so bountifully bestowed upon him. This is far from being an unnatural transition, although it is emotional rather than logical. It may be said, too, that the descent, if we may call it such, is all the more pathetic, as thus succeeding a meditation so glorious and profound. *T. Lewis.*

In this chapter we have a description of the life of a great chieftain, no mere sheikh of a nomad tribe, but the prince of a state in which civilization had made considerable progress, and laws were administered with intelligence and care. The points which he enumerates are important for their bearing on the date of the work; they belong to an early age, and are entirely free from allusions to habits or institutions of later origin, from aught that can remind us of Judah under the successors of David. *Cook.*

A pathetic picture of Job's former prosperity and respect. The passage has these parts: First (vs. 2-10), a sorrowful review of the happiness of former days, in which the things that made up this happiness, now departed, are enumerated: God's keeping of him (v. 2), His light upon his path (v. 3), and His intimacy and protection over his tent (v. 4); the presence of his children about him (v. 5); the prosperity, almost more than natural, that flowed in upon

him in ways unsought (v. 6); and above all the respect and reverence paid him by his fellow-citizens, as he sat in their council and went among them (vs. 7-10). This last is the great thought that fills the chapter and forms the contrast to the wretchedness and the contempt from the meanest of mankind which he now endures (chap. 30); second (vs. 11-17), the reason of this universal reverence of men for him—his benevolence and impartial justice; third (vs. 18-20), an almost involuntary reference to his calm and sure outlook into the future amid this universal respect; fourth (vs. 21-25), after which the great thought of the passage, his high place among men and the delight which his benevolent intercourse with them was to him, again rushes into his mind. A. B. D.

1. It would seem that when Job had brought his discourse to the point which forms the close of the last chapter, he again paused to see if any of the friends were disposed to speak. But as none answered, he proceeded; for at the beginning of this chapter we again meet with the unusual formula, "And Job again took up his parable." The interval may have been of some duration, during which he appears to have been musing deeply on his former prosperity and happiness, and on the contrast to it which his present condition offered. The influence of these thoughts is seen when he again speaks. His speech is full of lingering regrets over the pleasant memories of his past estate, of which he gives a most eloquent description, replete with natural touches of pathos and tenderness. It marks the character of the man, that so far from being alienated from loving sympathies with his kind by the miseries he had suffered and the injurious treatment to which he had been exposed, he looks back with peculiar pleasure upon the good which in better days his wealth and influence enabled him to accomplish. *Kitto.*

2-9. He refers it all to God as the author and upholder thereof. It was His light that shone upon him, and by which he walked through darkness. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him (Psalm 25:14), and this was upon Job's tabernacle. God showed him that in His covenant which is hidden from the men of the world, and revealed unto the children of light. There are some fine touches of pathos in this retrospective description of what he was when his children were about him, and he was surrounded by the homage and respect of all who knew him. The exuberance of his wealth is expressed under the figure of "the rock pouring out rivers of oil." In Syria and Arabia the

olive abounds in rocky places. One of God's blessings on Jacob was, that "He made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." We have here a most eloquent representation of the universal esteem in which Job was held—of the awe which his presence inspired among the young, and the reverence that was called forth from the aged. T. C.

2. Months of old. Job looks back to his lost happiness as to a thing long since passed away; it is lost in a mist of blinding sorrow.

When God watched over me. Job never omits to refer all to God. It is the habit, or, as old logicians say, the *form* of his mind; it belongs to his inmost nature. Cook.

That he had comfort in his God was the chief thing he rejoiced in in his prosperity, as the spring of it and the sweetness of it; that he had the favor of God and the tokens of that favor. He makes the same acknowledgment that David does (Psalm 30 : 5), *Thou, by Thy favor, hast made my mountain stand strong.* A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world.

3. *God's candle shined upon his head*—that is, God lifted up the light of His countenance upon him, gave him the assurances and relishes of His love. Such abundant satisfaction did Job take in the Divine favor, that by the light of that he walked through darkness; that guided him in his doubts, comforted him in his griefs, bare him up under his burdens, and helped him through all his difficulties. Those that are interested in the favor of God and know how to value it can, by the light of that, walk cheerfully and comfortably through all the darkness of this vale of tears. That puts gladness into the heart, enough to balance the grievances of this present time.

4. *The secret of God was upon my tabernacle*—that is, when God conversed freely with him, as one bosom friend with another. *The secret of the Lord is said to be with them that fear Him, for He shows them that in His covenant which others see not* (Psalm 25 : 14). God communicates His favor and grace to His people, and receives the returns of their devotion in a way secret to the world. H.

5. The blessed fellowship of Eloah, indicating familiarity, confiding, unreserved intercourse, ruled over his tent; the Almighty was still with him, protecting and blessing him; and his children were round about him. D.

My children were about me. He must be made of hard stuff who hears not in these words the echo of a sigh. The sentiment is exquisitely tender. He could not bear to

dwell upon it—nor need we do so; it is a most intelligible stroke of natural emotion. Kitto.

—When our children are children we should really have them "about us." When our children are about us we should consider, with Job, that we are prosperous. When our children are about us we should tend them very carefully, and train them up in the way they should go. When our children are about us we should be careful not only to teach them, but to learn the lessons which they can teach us. These lessons are taught in no other school so well. When our children are about us we should anticipate the time when, as in the case of the patriarch, they will all be away. Many a Job stands amid the relics of the past, looking back, and plaintively or thankfully recalling the days when the children were about him. Well, but look forward. Antedate the time. Anticipate the inevitable severance and work for the formation of the deeper, the immortal union. If you have wealth—heart property—in these children, *as children*, know it now; for the riches will "make to themselves wings, and flee away." If you have nurture to give them, suitable to their tenderness, preparation for their strength, give it now; in a little while they will be too hard and strong in nature's growth to take it. If there are lessons which the Master would have you learn of them while they are yet young, and which they cannot teach, nor you learn of them when they are older, then learn the lessons now, for soon the little faces will be seen no more at your table, the patter of the little feet heard no more in your rooms. A. Raleigh.

7. Job, a rich landowner, probably did not live in the city, but on his estate that adjoined it. He took part, however, in all the life of the city, and sat in the council that guided its affairs. The "gate" is spoken of as the place where the council or assembly of the town met. Such a "gate" is usually a building of considerable size, like an arcade, and hence it is spoken of here as an independent edifice *by* or *beside* the city. A. B. D.—Judgment was administered in the gate, the place of concourse, to which every man might have a free access; that every one who would might be a witness to all that was said and done; and that, when judgment was given against the guilty, others might hear and fear. H.

11–25. It was not his wealth alone which procured for him all this consideration; his goodness, more than his greatness, had to do with it. He was the object of a general and grateful benediction because of his kindness to

the poor and those who were ready to perish. There was a moral reverence awarded to him, not for his humanity alone, but also for his justice—he sat on the seat of judgment, where he searched out the cause that was brought before him and redressed the wrongs of the injured. In the days of his affluence and high reputation it was not his worth only, but his wisdom that drew upon him the general confidence and respect of the community—men kept silence at his counsel, and after his words spake not again. And he not only spoke to them with the weight of an adviser, but with the authority of a king. He chose out their way and sat amongst them as a chief among his subjects—“and the light of his countenance they cast not down.” It was not undervalued as the familiarity is which breeds contempt; but his notice and smile conferred a felt distinction on those to whom he gave them. Altogether, he presents us with a striking picture of the elevation and glory to which God had raised him. T. C.

11-14. He valued himself by the care he took of those that were least able to help themselves—the poor and the needy, the widows and the fatherless, the blind and lame, who could not be supposed either to merit his favor or ever to be in a capacity to recompense it. He valued himself by the conscience he made of justice and equity in all his proceedings; his friends had unjustly censured him as an oppressor: “So far from that,” says he, “that I always made it my business to maintain and support right.” He devoted himself to the administration of justice. *I put on righteousness, and it clothed me*—that is, he had an habitual disposition to execute justice, and put on a fixed resolution to do it. H.

14. This beautiful figure is common in Hebrew and in Arabic poetry. The robes of state worn on such occasions by judges and chieftains were thus regarded as a symbol or representation of the clothing of righteousness; the man is lost in the judge; all private, selfish feelings are covered over, forgotten, and buried. The two clauses are no mere tautology. Job put on righteousness, that was his free act, and it in return clung to him, became at once a permanent habit and a glorious ornament. *Dia-dem, i.e.,* the turban of costly shawls wound round the head; a primeval custom. *Cook.*—Job clothed himself with righteousness, so that as a man he was lost in the justice that clothed him; and justice clothed itself in him—he, on the other hand, was justice become a person. A. B. D.

Where silence against false imputations may be interpreted a confession, there the protestation of a man's own innocence is ever just, and sometimes necessary. When others do us open wrong it is not vanity, but charity, to do ourselves open right; and whatsoever appearance of folly or vain boasting there is in so doing, they are chargeable with all that compel us thereunto, and not we. “I am become a fool in glorying,” saith Paul, “ye have compelled me” (2 Cor. 12: 11). It was neither pride nor passion in Job, but such a compulsion as this that made him so often in this book proclaim his own righteousness. *Bishop Sanderson.*

15, 16. From speaking of rendering simply right and justice without respect of persons, Job next refers to acts of beneficence—to the blind, the lame, the needy, and the shrinking sufferers that avoid notoriety. To care for the stranger was reckoned an especial duty among the Orientals. Job, without specifically defending himself against Eliphaz's uncharitable and unjust imputations (chap. 22), answers them by appealing to the facts, which could not be denied. Instead of oppressing the needy and helpless, he had been their constant friend and benefactor. *Curry.*

16. The cause of him whom I knew not. Not merely the poor about him, to whom he might feel that he owed help, but even strangers who had a cause that needed unravelling he aided by his wisdom and justice. A. B. D.

17. The picture is that of hardened and heartless tyrants and oppressors (especially unrighteous judges seem to be here meant), who are compared to ravening beasts of prey, from whose teeth the prey must be rescued. The figure of breaking the jaw is forceful and well suited to the purpose of indicating the only proper method of dealing with such miscreants. *Curry.*—As an advocate Job won the cause; then as chief he enforces the sentence; he is advocate, judge, sheriff, and executioner; a necessary and effective combination of offices in an imperfectly organized community. *Cook.*

24. “I laughed on them, when they had no confidence,

And the light of my countenance they cast not down.”

Job, with his broader insight and more capable counsel, smiled on those who were perplexed and despondent; what seemed insurmountable difficulty or threatened disaster to them, seemed to him a thing easy to overcome and nothing to create alarm; while, on the other hand, the despondency of others was never able to cloud

the cheerfulness of his countenance, so full was his mind of resource.

25. A concluding picture of the joy which he had in the fellowship of men, and how they recognized his worth and set him as a king among them, and yet how he with his high advantages and great wealth felt toward them, being among them as one that comforteth the mourning. A. B. D.

The Book of Job is among the oldest books in the world ; and for this reason alone it would

be of great value and interest for its pictures of primitive society in Arabia, and as a repository of early thought upon nature and the problems of life. The venerable patriarch, with his vast possessions, his large family, his numerous retinue, yet living in a grand simplicity, and more honored for his virtue than his wealth ; the protector of the poor, the friend of the widow and the fatherless, the judge of the city, “unto whom men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at his counsel”—such a picture is unsurpassed by Homer for vivid beauty. J. P. T.

CHAPTER XXX.

1 BUT now they that are younger than I have
me in derision,
Whose fathers I disdained to set with the
dogs of my flock.
2 Yea, the strength of their hands, whereto
should it profit me ?
Men in whom ripe age is perished.
3 They are gaunt with want and famine ;
They gnaw the dry ground, in the gloom of
wasteness and desolation.
4 They pluck salt-wort by the bushes ;
And the roots of the broom *are* their meat.
5 They are driven forth from the midst of
men ;
They cry after them as after a thief.
6 In the clefts of the valleys must they dwell,
In holes of the earth and of the rocks.
7 Among the bushes they bray ;
Under the nettles they are gathered together.
8 *They are* children of fools, yea, children of
base men ;
They were scourged out of the land.
9 And now I am become their song,
Yea, I am a byword unto them.
10 They abhor me, they stand aloof from me,
And spare not to spit in my face.
11 For he hath loosed his cord, and afflicted
me,
And they have cast off the bridle before me.
12 Upon my right hand rise the rabble ;
They thrust aside my feet,
And they cast up against me their ways of
destruction.
13 They mar my path,
They set forward my calamity,
Even men that have no helper.

14 As through a wide breach they come :
In the midst of the ruin they roll themselves
upon me.
15 Terrors are turned upon me,
They chase mine honour as the wind ;
And my welfare is passed away as a cloud.
16 And now my soul is poured out within me ;
Days of affliction have taken hold upon me.
17 In the night season my bones are pierced in
me,
And the *pains* that gnaw me take no rest.
18 By the great force of *my disease* is my gar-
ment disfigured :
It bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.
19 He hath cast me into the mire,
And I am become like dust and ashes.
20 I cry unto thee, and thou dost not answer
me :
I stand up, and thou lookest at me.
21 Thou art turned to be cruel to me :
With the might of thy hand thou persecut-
est me.
22 Thou liftest me up to the wind, thou causest
me to ride *upon it* ;
And thou dissolvest me in the storm.
23 For I know that thou wilt bring me to
death,
And to the house appointed for all living.
24 Surely against a ruinous heap he will not
put forth his hand ;
Though *it be* in his destruction, *one may utter*
a cry because of these things.
25 Did not I weep for him that was in trou-
ble ?
Was not my soul grieved for the needy ?
26 When I looked for good, then evil came ;

And when I waited for light, there came
darkness.
27 My bowels boil, and rest not ;
Days of affliction are come upon me.
28 I go mourning without the sun :
I stand up in the assembly, and cry for
help.

THIS chapter forms a contrast to chap. 29 ; and, as in that picture of Job's past felicity the brightest part was the high respect he enjoyed among men—sitting as a prince in the midst of them—so in this, the darkest part is the contumely and indignity he suffers from the basest and most abject of mankind. Chap. 29 ended with a reference to his former high place among men, and the present chapter starts with the antithesis to this, the contempt in which the base-born races now hold him. The subjects touched upon in the chapter are the same as those in chap. 29, though they are pursued in the reverse order. A. B. D.—The two pictures, looked at in succession, show the changes to which the sufferer had been subjected, and of which he complained. Viewed in connection with the harsh judgments of his friends, the comparison becomes Job's apology for his impatience and the bitterness with which he arraigned God Himself. *Curry.*

Job's last bitter outcry. Formerly a prince among nobles he is now despised by the vilest of men (vs. 1-10) ; insults are heaped on him simply because he is afflicted of God (vs. 11-14). The afflictions reach him on all sides, from within and from without ; his soul is full of terrors and anguish, his body consumed and tortured, he is cast into the dust (vs. 15-19). The greatest of all miseries is that his prayers are still unheard, that God is cruel to him (vs. 20-22). So he despairs of life (vs. 23, 24) ; yet Job had ever been compassionate and pitiful (v. 25), and looked for good and light (26), but is now reduced to bitter and ceaseless lamentations (27-31). *Cook.*

The section (vs. 1-14) appears to be a strong and spirited description of those villainous Arabs who, when Job was in his prosperity, had felt the severity of his justice and fled into the lurking-places of the desert. Upon the loss of his authority, these miscreants came to revenge themselves upon him by the most scurrilous abuse. In drawing their character he insists much on the misery of their habitation and way of living, as circumstances very expressive of the turpitude and barbarity of their manners. *Scott.*

11-15. Though no longer heated by the

29 I am a brother to jackals,
And a companion to ostriches.
30 My skin is black, *and falleth* from me,
And my bones are burned with heat
31 Therefore is my harp *turned* to mourning,
And my pipe into the voice of them that
weep.

strife of the conflict with his would-be comforters, Job still persists in recognizing God as the cause of his sufferings. *He* has "loosed his cord"—has afflicted him, and given loose reins to his adversaries. The miscreants at whose hands he suffers the insults of which he complains are the instruments of a higher hand. *Curry.*—Job had been in such a way given over to be mocked by the most wretched, because *God and the Divine powers which cause calamity had delivered him over to the same.* For these are the principal subjects in vs. 11-14, not those miserable outcasts of human society just spoken of. *Zöckler.*

15. Schultens observes that it is usual with the Arabian writers to compare hopes and promises which are not fulfilled, to a cloud which raises expectation of a plentiful shower, but is presently dispersed by the wind. In the parched country of Arabia we may see the propriety and force of this comparison. *Scott.*

16, 17. Job now returns to the contemplation of his own wretchedness—his very soul is "poured out"—a figure strikingly expressive of the weakening, dissolving influence of deep and long-continued sorrow. He has become the helpless and unresisting subject of long-continued afflictions which now thoroughly possess him. *Curry.*

18. Because the body is wasted away to a skeleton there is an end to the rich appearance and beautiful flow which the outer garments gain by the full and rounded forms of the limbs ; it falls down straight, in perpendicular folds, upon the wasted body, and contributes in no small degree to make him whom one formerly saw in all the fulness of health still less recognizable. *Bindeth me* is not merely the falling together of the outer garment which was formerly filled out by the members of the body, but its appearance when the sick man wraps himself in it ; then it girds him, fits close to him like his shirt collar, lying round his shrivelled figure like the other about a thin neck. *D.*

20. Job represents the Almighty as looking on calm and pitiless, when he stands holding out his hands in prayer. *Cook* —That God did not appear for him cut him to the heart

more than anything else. He addressed himself to Him, but gained no grant; appealed to Him, but gained no sentence; he was very importunate in his applications, but in vain. "*I cry unto Thee* as one in earnest, I stand up and cry, as one waiting for an answer, but Thou hearest not, Thou regardest not, for anything I can perceive." If our most fervent prayers bring not in speedy and sensible returns, we must not think it strange. Though the seed of Jacob did never seek in vain, yet they have often thought that they did. H.

20-23. Here his feeling almost gets the mastery of the speaker, so that it is only with difficulty that he can restrain himself; the speaking of God changes into a direct address to Him. If after the first vain complaint he remains standing without getting calmer, if he waits therefore, then God resents it; yea, becomes a cruel, pursuing enemy, causes him, when he has been lifted up by violence to ride away and perish in the wind and storm, as if death had already seized him to carry him away. *Ewald*.—Job thus retains the conviction which he has all along expressed, that his sufferings will only end with death. The absolute abandonment of all earthly hope was the real condition of his trial. It was important that it should be recorded here, in his last discourse, immediately before his final vindication of his former life, and his determination under all circumstances to appeal to God Himself for judgment (31 : 35) and to hold fast to His righteousness. *Cook*.

23. Thou wilt bring me to death. It is a solemn thought that, more surely than that any one of us will lie down to sleep to-night or rise from sleep to-morrow, each one of us will have to pass through, separately and alone, that act of dying, and that state of death, of which there is no one to tell us either the nature or the consequences. No one comes back from death to enlighten us as to its essence; and if such a return were ordained for any, he could not make us understand; he could not put us, in imagination or in knowledge, in the place which each one must occupy some day by actual experience. Such a prospect is serious; only a fool can despise it. The fear of death is the natural feeling; and from that fear grows (the apostle says) bondage. But if Christ has taken away our guilt; has borne our sins and made an atonement for iniquity; has procured for us pardon from God, and love, and blessing, and eternal life; and this by His own obedience unto death; then the words are fulfilled which say that Christ is the Destroyer of

Death by His death; by that death from which indeed He rose, but by that death wherein and whereby He bore and took away the sin of the world. C. J. V.—Death itself can do us no real prejudice; on the contrary, we have reason to welcome it as a friend, because, when it beats down these tenements of clay in which we are lodged, or rather imprisoned upon earth, it only opens a passage for us into a far more commodious and lasting habitation, where we shall possess the greatest riches, the highest honors, and the most transporting pleasures, without intermission and without end. *R. Walker*.

24. Job characterizes himself as a heap of ruins, and, appealing to the Almighty, argues that against such a thing one does not stretch out a hostile hand; neither does one derive advantage to himself from another's calamity. This sense fits into v. 25 very well—Job, so far from increasing misfortune which he saw, commiserated and helped it. A. B. D.

27. These expressions, in their literal meaning, describe the violent inward heat caused by his inflammatory disease. They may likewise include the ferment of his mind ever since his afflictions came upon him. *Scott*.—*My bowels are made to boil* is an expression of violent mental agitation and suffering. A phrase of the same meaning occurs in Lam. 1 : 20 and 2 : 11, translated in the common version, *my bowels are troubled* (properly, *are made to boil*). Similar expressions occur in other ancient languages. The figure is a natural one, founded on the physical agitation and pain experienced in seasons of great mental anguish. (See Jer. 31 : 20.) *Conant*.

31. This is Job's last sorrowful lament before the catastrophe. With what a delicate touch of the past is it that he makes this lament die away so melodiously. One hears the prolonged vibration of its elegiac strains. The festive, joyous music is hushed; the only tones are tones of sadness and lament—*mesto, flebile*. D.

This long and painful enumeration of Job's miseries comes in the right place; *after* the declaration which shows the unshaken firmness of his convictions, and his deep sense of the absolute, though unsearchable wisdom of Him by whom he was afflicted; and *before* his last complete vindication of his integrity. The outer gloom goes on increasing to the very end of his trial; the exposure, shame, and ignominy, inward terrors, loathsome disease, unanswered prayer, certainty of near death, the nervous system wholly prostrate, all these in their combination give him not a momentary repose, and

draw from his heart reluctant, but unrestrained complainings. Satan has had his will, he has reached within the skin ; and though forbidden to take the life, he has done that which was sufficient to prove the result of a mortal trial, he has made Job feel that life was gone ; but

with all that he has not advanced one step toward real success ; the deeper the sense of God's alienation the more earnest are Job's pleadings for a hearing ; he holds fast his integrity, and far from renouncing God only seeks His presence. *Cook.*

CHAPTER XXXI.

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| <p>1 I MADE a covenant with mine eyes ;
How then should I look upon a maid ?</p> <p>2 For what <i>is</i> the portion from God above,
And the heritage from the Almighty on high ?</p> <p>3 Is it not calamity to the unrighteous,
And disaster to the workers of iniquity ?</p> <p>4 Doth not he see my ways,
And number all my steps ?</p> <p>5 If I have walked with vanity,
And my foot hath hasted to deceit ;</p> <p>6 (Let me be weighed in an even balance,
That God may know mine integrity ;)</p> <p>7 If my step hath turned out of the way,
And mine heart walked after mine eyes,
And if any spot hath cleaved to mine hands :</p> <p>8 Then let me sow, and let another eat ;
Yea, let the produce of my field be rooted out.</p> <p>9 If mine heart have been enticed unto a woman,
And I have laid wait at my neighbour's door :</p> <p>10 Then let my wife grind unto another,
And let others bow down upon her.</p> <p>11 For that were an heinous crime ;
Yea, it were an iniquity to be punished by the judges :</p> <p>12 For it is a fire that consumeth unto Destruction,
And would root out all mine increase.</p> <p>13 If I did despise the cause of my manservant
or of my maidservant,
When they contended with me :</p> <p>14 What then shall I do when God riseth up ?
And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him ?</p> <p>15 Did not he that made me in the womb make him ?
And did not one fashion us in the womb ?</p> <p>16 If I have withheld the poor from <i>their</i> desire,
Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail ;</p> | <p>17 Or have eaten my morsel alone,
And the fatherless hath not eaten thereof ;</p> <p>18 (Nay, from my youth he grew up with me
as with a father,
And her have I guided from my mother's womb ;)</p> <p>19 If I have seen any perish for want of clothing,
Or that the needy had no covering ;</p> <p>20 If his loins have not blessed me,
And if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep ;</p> <p>21 If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless,
Because I saw my help in the gate :</p> <p>22 Then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder blade,
And mine arm be broken from the bone.</p> <p>23 For calamity from God was a terror to me,
And by reason of his excellency I could do nothing.</p> <p>24 If I have made gold my hope,
And have said to the fine gold, <i>Thou art</i> my confidence ;</p> <p>25 If I rejoiced because my wealth was great,
And because mine hand had gotten much ;</p> <p>26 If I beheld the sun when it shined,
Or the moon walking in brightness ;</p> <p>27 And my heart hath been secretly enticed,
And my mouth hath kissed my hand :</p> <p>28 This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judges :
For I should have lied to God that is above.</p> <p>29 If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me,
Or lifted up myself when evil found him ;</p> <p>30 (Yea, I suffered not my mouth to sin
By asking his life with a curse ;)</p> <p>31 If the men of my tent said not,
Who can find one that hath not been filled with his meat ?</p> <p>32 The stranger did not lodge in the street ;
But I opened my doors to the traveller ;</p> |
|--|--|

33 If like Adam I covered my transgressions,
By hiding mine iniquity in my bosom ;
34 Because I feared the great multitude,
And the contempt of families terrified me,
So that I kept silence, and went not out of
the door—
35 Oh that I had one to hear me !
(Lo, here is my signature, let the Almighty
answer me ;)
And *that I had* the indictment which mine
adversary hath written !
36 Surely I would carry it upon my shoulder ;
I would bind it unto me as a crown.

37 I would declare unto him the number of my
steps ;
As a prince would I go near unto him.
38 If my land cry out against me,
And the furrows thereof weep together ;
39 If I have eaten the fruits thereof without
money,
Or have caused the owners thereof to lose
their life :
40 Let thistles grow instead of wheat,
And cockle instead of barley.

The words of Job are ended.

IN picturesqueness and force this passage is remarkable. Virtues and vices breathe and move. Job does not mention chastity and lust by name ; but declares that he has made a league with his eyes, as two persons enter into a covenant for some common end. He does not speak of benevolence ; but of warming the poor man with the fleece of his lambs. Nor of superstition ; but of kissing his hand to the moon. A complete system of ethics is presented in a series of pictures, each of which is simple and clear-cut. *Gilbert.*

As Job is unable to discover any connection between these deepest afflictions and that well-founded hope of his earlier life save in the supposition of his personal sin, there is nothing left for him, in his present intensified longing for deliverance, except at the close to protest most solemnly his innocence. *Ewald.*—This chapter contains Job's last and strongest asseverations of righteousness, a kind of solemn testimony which is to be lifted up before God, to be seen and judged. J. F. G.

Job concludes the whole series of discourses with a solemn protestation of his integrity in all relative duties. The points which he selects belong altogether to natural religion, or rather to religion as it was understood and practised by the patriarchs, without a single reference or allusion to the specific institutions of Israel. He dwells in succession upon inward purity and integrity (vs. 1-11) ; upon equity in dealing with dependants (vs. 13-15) ; upon compassion to the poor and destitute (vs. 16-23) ; upon freedom from covetousness, from the pride of wealth (vs. 24, 25), and from the earliest form of false religion (vs. 26-28), upon superiority to envious and malignant feelings (vs. 29, 30) ; upon liberality to neighbors and to strangers (vs. 31, 32) ; upon honesty in confession of transgressions ; and winds up with a solemn call upon the Almighty to hear his protestation and to judge his cause, confident of a complete

and triumphant vindication. A few words in conclusion, which may perhaps have been transposed by copyists, declare Job's integrity in his relations as a great landowner. Exceeding interest attaches to this chapter as containing a complete code of patriarchal morality. *Cook.*

The chapter consists of a series of protestations on the one hand, accompanied on the other by curses on himself if these protestations of innocence are not true. Occasionally appeals are made to God to judge him ; and in some instances the considerations are stated which weighed with him and restrained him from the sins of which he protests his innocence. In Job's present condition, when he now speaks some of these imprecations appear unsuitable. But we must consider that as he is reviewing his past life, his mind throws him back into the circumstances in which he was then living, and this brings before him the considerations and feelings which then weighed with him. The chapter falls into three sections : First (vs. 1-12), Job clears himself of all those secret sensual desires of the heart which seduce men into shameful conduct ; second (vs. 13-23), he repudiates all abuse of his power in reference to those inferior in rank, and all selfish indifference to the sufferings and wants of the unfortunate ; third (vs. 24-40), he clears himself of every secret feeling that would be accounted dishonorable, whether in regard to men or God. A. B. D.

1. Job prescribed a law to his eyes. Of all the senses Job singles out the finest, that through which the approaches of sensuality are most subtle and dangerous. The declaration stands well-nigh alone in the Old Testament and anticipates the saying of our Lord in Matt. 5 : 28. *Cook.*—Here, in the middle of the Old Testament, without the pale of the Old Testament law, we meet with just that moral strictness and depth with which the Preacher

on the mount opposes the spirit to the (mere) letter of the seventh commandment. D.

The "eye," the lusts of which are frequently spoken of in Scripture, is the great inlet through which that which is without affects the heart and stirs evil desire. Job made a "covenant" or agreement with his eyes, that they should obey his mind, or act always in harmony with his higher self. A. B. D.—Those that would keep their hearts pure must guard their eyes, which are both the outlets and inlets of uncleanness. Hence we read of wanton eyes (Isa. 3: 16), and *eyes full of adultery* (2 Pet. 2: 14). The first sin began in the eye (Gen. 3: 6). What we must not meddle with, we must not lust after; and what we must not lust after, we must not look at; not the forbidden wealth (Prov. 23: 5), not the forbidden wine (Prov. 23: 31), not the forbidden woman (Matt. 5: 28). H.—That sin may be avoided, we must avoid whatever leads to or occasions it. He that feareth burning must take heed of playing with fire. He that feareth drowning must keep out of deep water. He that feareth the plague must not go into an infected house. They do not avoid sin who present themselves to the opportunities of it. *Caryl.*

2. Uncleanness is a sin that forfeits all good and shuts us out from the hope of it. *What portion of God is there from above?* What blessing can impure sinners expect from the pure and holy God, or what token of His favor?

4. He not only sees, but takes notice; He counts all my steps, all my false steps in the way of duty, all my by-steps into the way of sin. He not only sees our ways, but takes cognizance of our particular steps in these ways—every action, every motion. He keeps count of all because He will call us to account, will bring every work into judgment. God takes a more exact notice of us than we do of ourselves; for who ever counted his own steps? Yet God counts them; let us therefore walk circumspectly. H.

How inexpressibly great is that Being who penetrates at once the recesses and circumscribes within Himself the boundless ranges of creation; who pierces into the profound meditations of the most sublime intelligence above with the same ease that He discerns the wayward projects of the child; who knows equally the abortive imaginations and the wisest plans of every creature that ever has thought or ever will think throughout the realms of intellect! How wonderful that wisdom which conducts at the same moment the innumerable purposes of all His creatures, and whose own grand purpose is

equally accomplished by the failure or success of all the plans of all His creatures! *Buckminster.*

See how God occupies Himself in our affairs! He informs Himself as to them all, and is not content till He has carried a searching gaze into every nook and corner of our history, and into the smallest particulars of our lives. He takes possession of all our secrets, uncovers all our hiding-places, insists on going with our feet, and even with our thoughts and feelings, on all their most private expeditions. He insists, too, on having an opinion on what He sees—making free to condemn or approve according to His finding of the facts. He will not only go with us wherever we go, and stay with us wherever we stay, bending on us an eye that never sleeps; but He will, at every turn and in all companies, give us His advice, whether we ask it or not, whether we are willing to have it or not. Unasked, undesired, repulsed, it may be, He still takes it upon Him to teach and discipline us, not incidentally and occasionally, but in a set system of education—rebuking, commanding, threatening, chastising even, as He sees occasion. He takes our hand and draws us hither and thither. Now He beckons us, and now he scourges us toward certain paths. He makes free with our property, our friends, our pleasures—to increase or lessen them, as He sees fit. In our plans and enterprises (all of them, whether great or small) He will have something to do, as well as something to say, either helping us or hindering us in His high independence. He especially busies Himself with our sins and virtues. He keeps a minute account of all our affairs, and has given out that He will one day bring us into formal judgment as to every work and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil—punishing and rewarding on the boundless field of an everlasting life; and doubtless He will be as good as His word. It is hard to see how God could busy Himself in our affairs more than He actually does, according to the Scriptures. *Burr.*

When we consider that He knows our actions whereof there are multitudes, and our thoughts whereof there are millions; that He views all the blessings bestowed upon us; all the injuries we have returned to Him; that He exactly knows His own bounty and our ingratitude; all the idolatry, blasphemy, and secret enmity in every man's heart against Him; all unjust oppressions, hidden lusts, omissions of necessary duties, violations of plain precepts, every foolish imagination, with all the circumstances of them, and that perfectly in all their full anat-

omy, every mite of unworthiness and wickedness in every circumstance, should not the consideration of this melt our hearts into humiliation before Him, and make us earnest in seeking pardon and forgiveness of Him? *Charnock.*

5-9. Job appeals to God, and imprecates a vengeance upon himself—if he have ever walked in the ways of that vanity, from which he habitually turned his eyes, or if he have given way to deceitful lusts, or if he have walked after the desire of his eyes, or incurred the guilt whether of covetousness or rapacity. The two sins of incontinency and avarice seem blended together, as in other parts of Scripture; but the evils of licentiousness and God's displeasure against it are most prominently brought out in this passage. T. C.

6. Let me be weighed, or, *let Him weigh me in a balance of righteousness*; the reference is to the day of final account, when all actions and thoughts will be weighed and requited according to the absolute law of righteousness. **That God may know.** Rather, *and God will know my integrity.* Job's one longing is for full searching inquiry, which must issue in his vindication. *Cook.*

8-10. Job is so conscious of his own innocence that he is willing it should be put to the utmost proof; and if found guilty, that he should be exposed to the most distressing and humiliating punishment; even to that of being deprived of his goods, bereaved of his children, his wife made a *slave*, and subjected to all indignities in that state. *A. Clarke.*—Grinding was the representative occupation of the female slave, hence chosen as the mark that his wife is domiciled and degraded in another house. J. F. G.

12. It is a fire. Lust is a fire in the soul; they that indulge it are said to *burn*. It consumes all that is good there, and lays the conscience waste. It kindles the fire of God's wrath, which, if not extinguished by the blood of Christ, will consume even to eternal destruction. It consumes the body, it consumes the substance, it roots out all the increase. Burning lusts bring burning judgments. Perhaps it alludes to the burning of Sodom, which was intended for an example to those who should afterward live ungodly. H.

13-23. Job repudiates all misuse of the power which his rank gave him, denying that he treated contemptuously his servants when they had a cause against him (vs. 13-15); that he was indifferent to the wants of the unprotected, or refused to bestow on them of his own bread and raiment (vs. 16-20); that he violently

wronged any, even though he could have secured a judgment favorable to him before the tribunal (v. 21); after which follows the imprecation (vs. 22, 23). A. B. D.

13. In ancient times *slaves* had no action at law against their owners, who might dispose of them as they did of their cattle or any other property. The slave might complain, and the owner might hear him if he pleased, but he was not compelled to do so. Job states that, far from preventing their case from being heard, he was ready to permit them to complain even against *himself* if they had a cause of complaint, and to give them all the benefit of the law. *A. Clarke.*

15. When he was tempted to be harsh with his servants, to deny them right and turn a deaf ear to their reasonings, this thought came very seasonably into his mind, "*Did not He that made me in the womb make him?*" I am a creature as well as he, and my being is derived and depending as well as his. Whatever difference there is among men in their outward condition, in their capacity of mind, or strength of body, or place in the world, He that made the one made the other also; which is a good reason why we should not mock at men's natural infirmities, nor trample upon those that are any way our inferiors, but in everything do as we would be done by. II.

16-22. Job's protestation of his just and merciful treatment of the poor and helpless whom he had seen about him. The poor were cared for, the widow was cheered, the fatherless had been fed from his own table; he had clothed the naked, and defended the orphan in the gate. Job well knew that God cared for all these, and because he feared to offend Him he was ready to care for them also. There seems to be here a reference to the charges brought against him by Eliphaz (22: 6-9), and his circumstantial enumeration of the same particulars, with solemn asseverations enforced with imprecations, might seem to intimate that the charges had deeply grieved him. *Curry.*—Such was Job's "religion pure and undefiled," who "visited" the orphan and "widow in their affliction, and kept himself unspotted from the world;" no wonder, then, that it was accepted before "God, even the Father." This surely is Gospel faith; and the Apostle James, in his excellent practical epistle, seems to allude particularly to the case of Job, whose "patience" he expressly celebrates in the following marked passages: chaps. 1: 4; 5: 11. *Hales.*

Only when we feel a thorough compassion for ourselves, have recognized in ourselves in

what the misery properly consists, the dark secret of life (or, as people say, "where the shoe pinches us"), only then can we feel a thorough compassion with others. But, on the other hand, only when we have a thorough compassion for the need of others, with the misery of humanity, when we in entire self-forgetfulness can give ourselves to the need of strangers, can take up into our heart all the woe of humanity, can our compassion with ourselves also in the same manner be purified from false egotism and small narrow-mindedness, and gain a truly higher and spiritual character. While we feel ourselves as individuals, we are likewise to feel ourselves members of the body of the entire community; we are also to be capable of suffering for others, for the whole, and keep alive in us the feeling that the individual has to seek and find his comfort even in that which has been given for comfort to all the world. *Martensen*.—It is positively injurious to be ever picturing to ourselves the woes of our fellow-men unless we endeavor to relieve them. Every time our compassion is stirred and no action is taken our hearts are hardened and our religion impaired. *Anon*.

In that most pathetic and wonderful incident (John 13: 12-17) Jesus sets forth the law for all His followers. That law is that dignity binds to service. If we are Christ's, we must stoop to serve, and serve to cleanse. The noblest form of help is to help men to get rid of their sin. The highest glory of powers and gifts is to humble one's self for the lowest, and to be ready to be a slave, if we may wash any stained soul or bind any bleeding feet. Only they are truly blessed who have no principles which do not regulate conduct, and no conduct which is not regulated by principle. The one principle which can shape all life into blessedness is, Do as Jesus has done for you. Stoop that you may serve, and let your service be cleansing. *A. M.*

21. Men in power should not satisfy themselves with what will pass among or be countenanced by men, but consider what is right in itself, what is right in the sight of God, and that they are in the sight of God. A bad business may pass very well among men, and we may have advocates who will answer for us and stop the mouths of all gainsayers; but can they stop the mouth of conscience? Can they blind the eyes of God or impose upon Him? God is the Judge of all the earth, and He will at last sit in judgment upon all the judges of the earth. *Caryl*.

23. To all these forms of the abuse of power

there is a completely corresponding punishment, which Job wishes, with deliberation, to be so terrible—not from thoughtlessness, but really trembling at the Divine punishment, and knowing that all human power shrinks to nothing before the Divine majesty. *Ewald*.

24-34. Repudiation of another class of secret sins, that would have dishonored him: secret joy in the possession of wealth—that love of gain which is idolatry (Col. 3: 5) (vs. 24, 25); a momentary impulse to salute the rising sun or the moon in her splendor, and thus be false to the true spiritual God on high (vs. 26-28); secret joy of heart at the misfortune of his enemy (vs. 29, 30); narrowness of soul and niggardliness (vs. 31, 32); and finally, hypocrisy (vs. 33, 34). *A. B. D.*

24. If I have made gold my hope. A repudiation of covetousness. Job had wealth, but he did not rejoice in it as his chief or ultimate good. He knew how to use it as not abusing it by overvaluation. The sin of covetousness belongs to all times, and it affects alike the rich and the poor. *Curry*.

25. If I rejoiced. A very remarkable saying, one which goes far beyond any recorded of early saints. *Cook*.—He took no pride in his wealth, as if it added anything to his real excellency, nor did he think that his might and the power of his hand got it him. He took no pleasure in it, in comparison with the spiritual things which were the delight of his soul. His joy did not terminate in the gift, but passed through it to the Giver. *H.*

26-28. If when I have beheld Thy glorious creatures, the sun and the moon, I have given way to any idolatrous conceits and have ascribed Divine honor unto them, as my heathen neighbors do; this were indeed a heinous and capital wickedness. *Bishop H.*—The only species of idolatry noticed in this book is Zabianism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies, which is the earliest on record, and an additional proof of the high antiquity of the composition; especially as it is noticed with abhorrence as a novelty deserving judicial punishment. We learn from Sir William Jones, that the people of Arabia very soon fell into the common but fatal error of adoring the sun and the firmament, the planets and fixed stars. *Hales*.

28. Job notices no other form of idolatry. Image worship, the adoration of Baal, Astarte, or of deities known in very early times to the Israelites, may or may not have been known to him, but it evidently did not come in his way; none of his friends allude to the possibility of his having been guilty of it; the only

thing which he does conceive as possible, is that he may have been secretly moved by the glory of the two great lights to see in them deities or visible representation of the Deity. Kissing the hand as a token of admiration and worship was an early and common practice in Syria. *Cook.*

29, 30. He protests that he was so far from doing or designing mischief to any, that he neither desired nor delighted in the hurt of the worst enemy he had. He did not so much as wish in his own mind that evil might befall him. He never *wished a curse to his soul* (curses to the soul are the worst of curses); never desired his death; he knew that if he did it would turn into sin to him.

32. He protests that he had never been unkind or inhospitable to strangers. He that is *at home* must consider those that are *from home*, and put his soul into their soul's stead, and then do as he would be done by. Hospitality is a Christian duty (1 Pet. 4 : 9). Job in his prosperity was noted for good housekeeping. *He opened his door to the road*; so it may be read; he kept the street door open, that he might see who passed by, and he invited them in, as Abraham (Gen. 18 : 1)

33. Zophar insinuated (20 : 12) that he *hid his iniquity under his tongue*. "No," says Job, "I never did, *I never covered my transgression as Adam*, never palliated a sin with frivolous excuses, nor ever *hid my iniquity in my bosom*, as a darling that I could by no means part with, or as stolen goods which I dreaded the discovery of." It is natural to us to cover our sins; we have it from our first parents; we are loath to confess our faults, willing to extenuate them, and make the best of ourselves, to devolve the blame upon others, as Adam on his wife, not without a tacit reflection upon God Himself. But *he that thus covers his sins shall not prosper* (Prov. 28 : 13). II.—Here is an explicit admission that he was not free from sin, which, had it been concealed, would have been iniquity; but, laid bare by honest confession, (it) *lost that character and deserved pardon*. *Cook*

34. He valued not the clamors of the mob, feared not a great multitude, nor did he value the menaces of the mighty; the contempt of families never terrified him. He was not deterred by the number or quality, the scorns or insults of the injurious from doing justice to the injured. He scorned to be swayed by any such considerations, nor ever suffered a righteous cause to be run down by a high hand. He feared the great God, not the great multitude, and His curse not the contempt of families. H.

35, 36. Job repudiates all hypocritical conduct or secret transgression. This was the charge his friends made against him. And this consciousness of purity of heart, struggling with false accusations of hypocrisy, forces from him a new appeal to God to make known to him the sins laid to his charge. The verses are closely connected with vs. 33, 34. A. B. D.

The most probable rendering of these two verses, of which the general sense is clear, may be as follows: *Oh, that I had one who would hear me! Lo, here is my signature! May the Almighty answer me! Oh, that I had the book which my adversary had written; surely I would take it on my shoulder, and bind it as diadems upon me.* It may thus be paraphrased. Would that there were one who would hearken to my pleading; here is my own statement fully drawn out and attested by my own formal signature; surely the Almighty, the righteous Judge, will not leave that statement unanswered. As for the writing which my adversary would be bound to produce in court, my one wish is that I had it; far from fearing shame, from dreading conviction, I would take it and lay it on my shoulders as a badge of honor (see Isa. 9 : 6 ; 22 : 22), or bear it as a crown upon my head. Two documents would be required in a full and formal investigation—the accuser's statement, drawn out previously and read in open court, and the answer of the accused with his signature. *Cook.*—The middle clause consists of two exclamations which force themselves in between the two parts of the wish which he expresses. By the first, *behold my signature*, Job means to say that he affixes his signature to all the protestations of his innocence just made in the preceding verses of the chapter, and attests them as his plea on his side. By the other, *let the Almighty answer me*, he challenges God, his accuser, to put in *His* plea in answer to his own. The language is evidently taken from the judicial practice of the time, according to which both charge and defence were laid before the court in writing. A. B. D.

Near unto Him. That is the crown of all, nearness to God. This appears, beyond all doubt, to be the close of Job's speech; it brings all that has been said to an absolute conclusion—every possible charge has been disposed of; Job's integrity stands clear, and he presents himself before God for judgment.

38-40. These verses are evidently misplaced, but they deal with a very necessary point for Job's vindication, for he had been distinctly charged with abuse of his power as owner of lands. *If my land cry out against me*—that is,

if it disown me as rightful possessor, if a single furrow of it has been acquired by injustice—a fine figure not unknown to Hebrew or classical poetry, and here standing just in its right place.

Cook.—The estate he had he both got and used honestly, so that his land could not *cry out against him, nor the furrows thereof complain* (v. 38), as they do against those who get the possession of them by fraud and extortion (Hab. 2 : 9-11). Two things he could say safely concerning his estate, that he *never ate the fruits of it without money* (v. 39). What he purchased he paid for, as Abraham for the land he bought (Gen. 23 : 16), and David (2 Sam. 24 : 24). The laborers that he employed had their wages duly paid them, and if he made use of the fruits of those lands that he let out, he paid his tenants for them or allowed it in their rent. That he never caused the owners thereof to lose their life ; never got an estate, as Ahab got Naboth's vineyard, killing the heir and seizing the inheritance ; never starved those that held lands of him, nor killed them with hard bargains and hard usage. No tenant, no workman, no servant he had could complain of him. II.

The closing sentence, The words of Job are ended, have all the appearance of an editorial note, a *finis*, not unlike that found at the end of Psalm 72, and also at the beginning of the song of Hezekiah (Isa. 38 : 9). It is, however, very old, being found in the LXX. *Curry.*

Here is an amazing instance and example of a very great prince, who, when he had no superior to control him, gave such instances of his chastity, temperance, justice, charity, compassion, devotion, as few of his quality have imitated, worthy as they are all of imitation. *Bishop Wilson.*—Job's attitude has been emphasized at every step—supreme longing for the restoration of God's presence. “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” has been the constant burden of his cry ; and beginning with his despairing wish for a Daysman, his creative faith has kept on until he knew that somewhere beyond this life he would see God as his friend. The whole determination of his life is toward God. J. F. G.

Here ends the controversy between Job and his friends. The grand question in debate between them was, Whether Job was a sinner and a hypocrite or not. Both parties draw their arguments from the providence of God, which they both agreed could not act wrong. The friends represent his extraordinary calamities as a visible judgment on him for his sins ; and because he had none that were public and noto-

rious, they at first insinuate and afterward plainly assert that he must needs have been guilty of some secret bosom sin, and that of the deepest dye, that could subject him to such extreme misery ; for that God never afflicts in so remarkable a manner but for sins of great magnitude. For which they appeal to experience : “Recollect, I pray thee,” says Eliphaz, “what innocent person ever perished ? and when were the righteous cut off ?” (4 : 7.) “Behold,” says Bildad, “God will not cast off the perfect man, neither will He help the evil-doers” (8 : 20), and Zophar tells him bluntly, “Know therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth !” (11 : 6.) Job, on the other hand, defends himself by setting before them another view of providence. He denies an exact retributive justice in this life, arguing from the general course of it ; whereas they argued chiefly from extraordinary exceptions ; they had seen a good man sometimes remarkably delivered, and oftentimes a wicked man remarkably punished. But he bids them reflect how many they had known who were notoriously wicked, and had nevertheless prospered a long time, and no extraordinary calamity befell them in the course of their lives nor in their deaths. And though it was not so easy to discern who were really good (a bad inside being often covered by a good outside), yet he bids them consider what ravages were sometimes made either by the pestilence or the sword ; and they must needs be convinced that many good men must unavoidably suffer with the bad in such great and general devastations. So that no certain conclusion could be drawn of men's being either good or bad from what they enjoyed or what they suffered in this world. And, therefore, it was rash and even wicked in them to charge him with heinous sins, without any apparent foundation besides the greatness of his sufferings. This is evidently the way of reasoning on both sides ; and the leading object for Job's repeated wishes for an immediate trial before God with his accusers ; and when that failed, his hope of a future resurrection at the day of judgment was, by such a solemn appeal, to convince them if possible of his innocence. *Peters, Hales.*

Light falls on the question started by Satan at the beginning, “Doth Job fear God for nought ?” It is fully proved that his piety was not mercenary or selfish, but deep-seated in his heart. At the same time, we have a most skilful delineation of the influence produced in course of the controversy on the mind of the afflicted patriarch himself, exposed as he was

to the danger of defying heaven, and casting off all religious reverence and belief ; but softened at times and subdued, as with the dropping of a gentle dew from above on his heart, and, with a strange mingling of audacity and plaintiveness of spirit, turning away from his fellow-men to his God. D. F.

In the vehemence of his opposition to his friends and in the intensity of his inward struggles Job has been betrayed into expressions which cannot be approved, in which he seems to arraign the equity of the Divine administration. Great consideration is requisite in judging of these expressions and in estimating their real meaning. Allowance must be made for the circumstances in which they were uttered. Words wrung from him in the bitterness of his heart and in the tumult of his feelings, under the terrible pressure of his sorrows and the exasperating treatment of his friends, are not to be regarded as though they had been spoken in calmer moments. But if Job had gone no further astray than this, that in his desperation and intolerable distress he had occasionally let slip what he subsequently regretted, and what did not express his real state of mind, no correction might have been deemed necessary. The fact, however, is that Job was involved in an irreconcilable conflict with himself. His most intimate and ineradicable convictions were seemingly at hopeless variance. On the one side was the consciousness of his own integrity, which was dearer to him than his life, which he could not deny nor part with, and which he was prepared to assert at all hazards. He knew from the testimony of his own conscience that he was not a gross and wicked offender ; and he made his confident appeal to the Searcher of hearts for the uprightness of his past life. But how, then, can he maintain his confidence in the justice and recti-

tude of God in His providential government ? A God who lets the wicked triumph and who afflicts the just, how can He be a righteous and a holy God ? Job cannot put these two things together, though he holds them both and will not abandon either. And yet, in the honest frankness of his soul, he does not and cannot shut his eyes to the fact that they do seem to him to clash. And, as in the guiltlessness of his nature he makes no concealment, what he feels he says. His controversy with God's providence is not limited, therefore, to a few passionate outbursts, which in moments of reflection he would gladly recall. But it is forced upon him by an inward necessity which he cannot escape. He has justified his own integrity against the suspicions and accusations of his friends. But how is the righteousness of God to be vindicated ? This is the problem. His friends can throw no light upon it, and he is as much in the dark as they. He still holds, indeed, with an unslackened grasp his confidence in God's righteousness, and he will not let it go. In his struggle to retain this great essential truth he had fought his way through to that grand burst of triumphant trust in God, in which he utters his faith in the unseen without a particle of misgiving, though flatly contradictory to outward sense : " I know that my Redeemer liveth," and that the Divine rectitude now so mysteriously hidden shall yet appear, and though He suffers me to perish in this world, He shall vindicate me in the next. But even this noble utterance leaves the black clouds of the present undispersed. The righteousness of God shall shine forth radiantly hereafter, but why is it so strangely obscured now ? This Job cannot answer ; and, though his trust abides in God's ultimate justice, it is, after all, a trust in a God who has hidden Himself. W. H. G.

CHAPTER XXXII.

- 1 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.
- 2 Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram : against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.
- 3 Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer,
- 4 and yet had condemned Job. Now Elihu

- 5 had waited to speak unto Job, because they were elder than he. And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was kindled.
- 6 And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said,
I am young, and ye are very old ;
Wherefore I held back, and durst not shew you mine opinion.

- 7 I said, Days should speak,
And multitude of years should teach wisdom.
- 8 But there is a spirit in man,
And the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding.
- 9 It is not the great that are wise,
Nor the aged that understand judgment.
- 10 Therefore I said, Harken to me ;
I also will shew mine opinion.
- 11 Behold, I waited for your words,
I listened for your reasons,
Whilst ye searched out what to say.
- 12 Yea, I attended unto you,
And, behold, there was none that convinced Job,
Or that answered his words, among you.
- 13 Beware lest ye say, We have found wisdom ;
God may vanquish him, not man :
- 14 For he hath not directed his words against me ;

- Neither will I answer him with your speeches.
- 15 They are amazed, they answer no more :
They have not a word to say.
- 16 And shall I wait, because they speak not,
Because they stand still, and answer no more ?
- 17 I also will answer my part,
I also will shew mine opinion.
- 18 For I am full of words ;
The spirit within me constraineth me.
- 19 Behold, my breast is as wine which hath no vent ;
Like new bottles it is ready to burst.
- 20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed ;
I will open my lips and answer.
- 21 Let me not, I pray you, respect any man's person ;
Neither will I give flattering titles unto any man.
- 22 For I know not to give flattering titles ;
Else would my Maker soon take me away.

THE debate between Job and the three friends closed with chap. 27, when Job had completed his response to Bildad's brief words in chap. 25. After that came (chap. 28) the interjected discourse on wisdom, and then Job's monologue, in three parts : A reminiscence of his former happy estate (chap. 29) ; a lament for his present misery (chap. 30) ; and a protestation, with imprecations, of his own uprightness (chap. 31). Job now ceased to speak, and at this point a new character is introduced. This person was "Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram." It is remarkable that this is the only one of the parties whose genealogy is fully given. We can gather little more from it than that Elihu belonged to a branch of the family of Abraham. His brother Nahor had two sons, Uz and Buz. Job, it would seem, was descended from the former, and Elihu appears to be descended from the latter ; and the circumstance of his being of the family of Buz was doubtless thus pointedly mentioned by the sacred writer to draw respectful attention to him, notwithstanding his youth, on account of his relationship to Abraham. He assumes the office of umpire in no unbecoming spirit, and decides the question between the disputants justly and well ; the best proof of which is found in the fact, that his tone of argument and his virtual decision are in all essential respects the same which the Voice from the whirlwind afterward declares. He also is exempted from the censures passed upon the arguments of the three friends, nor is

Job required to offer an expiatory offering on his account. These are manifest though tacit tokens of approval upon the reasonings and the decision of the son of Barachel. *Kitto*.

Chaps. 32-37 contain the discourse of Elihu, a new interlocutor. The actual position of the disputants was unsatisfactory. Job had not only maintained his piety and integrity, but had *imputed to God unrighteousness* in His dealings ; his opponents, on the other hand, had first insinuated and then openly declared that his calamities were a necessary and just punishment for wickedness, which they assumed, but were unable to prove. They had broken the law of charity, Job had trenched upon the reverence due to God. One point was common both to Job and his adversaries, they looked upon his afflictions as indications and results of God's wrath. At this crisis Elihu comes in ; he has a different theory to propose. The Divine chastisements have a loving purpose. They are intended to awaken a man's conscience, and to save him from destruction, they make him feel the want of a mediator, and prepare him for spiritual ministrations, which, if received in humility, give him right views of God's righteousness, bring him into a state of reconciliation, restore him his righteousness, and save him "from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." From this general principle Elihu proceeds, in chap. 34, to prove that it is impossible, from the very nature of things, that God, the supreme Almighty Ruler, should be unjust, and that such imputations as

those which Job had advanced involve very serious guilt ; instead of humility his afflictions had but taught him pride ; hence the silence of God ; had Job prayed he would have been heard, but he had spoken in vain, and multiplied words without a true knowledge of God's purposes. Job's only right course is to listen to God's teaching and to magnify His work, for His Being is unsearchable, and man's wisdom is but foolishness in His sight. The general structure of the discourse is thus tolerably clear, but it is exceedingly obscure in details. *Cook.*

As Oehler so well said, Elihu is indignant with Job, "because he could only justify himself by accusing God ; and indignant with the friends, because they could only justify God by accusing Job." The four discourses are the development of two great thoughts. First, what the friends ought to have said to Job, and what Job ought to have remembered, is that there are pains which, without being a retribution for any actual faults, are fitted for purifying man from the seeds of sin contained in his heart and to save him from falls to which he might be exposed. The second thought is : Even if we do not arrive at understanding the ways of God, He shows Himself too great and too wise in all nature to allow us to entertain a doubt of His perfection. God is not a mere "satrap," tempted to abuse a power only lent Him for a time. He is the Sovereign ; and we may therefore depend upon His justice. To accept suffering as a purifying ordeal or as a preventive warning, in which conscience cannot recognize a punishment, and to submit entirely, looking to God with the docility of faith—even to such as we can in no degree understand either as punishment or as trial—this is the whole wisdom of Elihu. It is slightly commonplace, it may be said ; but its originality consists in the contrast between it and the spurious wisdom of the friends and the rash language of Job. It is not the complete explanation of the mystery—Elihu knows nothing of the scene in the prologue—but until the veil is lifted, this is and remains the true wisdom. Accordingly Job does not answer. He does not yet confess himself defeated ; but he no longer argues. It is the beginning of his complete submission.

The authenticity of the speeches of Elihu has been strongly attacked. Are they then missing in any manuscripts ? No. There is no mention of this fourth friend, it is alleged, either in the prologue or epilogue. His appearance upon the scene and his speeches are, therefore, it is said, a later interpolation. But this argument

is weak. Elihu is not a fourth friend. It is expressly said that "his wrath was kindled *against Job and against his three friends.*" As to the silence on the subject of Elihu in the epilogue, that is natural. He can neither be praised as having solved the problem nor blamed as having spoken wrongly. He has said nothing but the truth, though not the whole truth. *Godet.*

Elihu is not spoken of in the beginning of the book, when the arrival of the three friends is mentioned, because there was no occasion for speaking of him then. He only engages in the dispute because the three friends have failed to find a satisfactory answer to Job ; and to refer to him in the outset would have been to anticipate their incapacity to deal with the subject before they had made the attempt. Job does not make answer to Elihu as he had done to the friends, because he is convinced of the truth of what he says, and he has therefore nothing to reply. The Lord makes no allusion to Elihu, when He subsequently expresses His approval of Job and passes censure on his friends, because he was not one of the parties to the strife which was to be adjusted. *W. H. G.*

The Elihu section theologically enriches the Old Testament with a monument of a truly Christian consciousness of sin. It expresses in Old Testament language the great truth announced by Paul, "When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11 : 32). *Cheyne.*

Chapter 32 contains three parts : First (v. 1). The reason why Job's three friends refrained from speaking further—they failed to make any impression on Job : he was right in his own eyes. Second (vs. 2-5). The Author in his own words introduces Elihu, stating the reasons which constrained this speaker to take part in the dispute. The anger of Elihu was kindled, *first*, against Job because he justified himself as against God, held himself in the right at the expense of God's righteousness ; and *second*, against the three friends because they failed to bring forward such arguments as effectively to condemn Job—that is, show him to be in the wrong in his complaints of God. In other words, the sole point which Elihu has in view is justification of God, and toward this point all his reasoning is directed. Job is guilty of wrong against God, and the three friends are to blame because they have not been able to bring this wrong home to Job. Third (vs. 6-22). Elihu is then introduced speaking in his own person ; stating the reasons which hitherto have

kept him from speaking and those which induce him now to take part in the controversy. He would have spoken sooner had he not been a youth in the midst of aged and presumably wise men. But he reflects, and indeed present events show it, that wisdom is not the prerogative of mere age ; it is a gift of God, and therefore he will advance his opinion. It is intolerable to him (v. 19) that a man like Job, who utters such perverse and godless sentiments (34 : 7), should not be put to silence ; and he is conscious of ability (vs. 8, 18) to answer him and all his class. A. B. D.

2. He justified himself rather than God. That is, Job took more care and pains to clear himself from the imputation of unrighteousness in being thus afflicted, than to clear God from the imputation of unrighteousness in afflicting him, as if he were more concerned for his own honor than for God's. H. —The greatness of his sufferings was in some measure the cause of his misconception, by exciting his feelings and preventing him from calmly considering his case. He had also received much provocation from his friends ; and from these concurrent excitements he is tempted into harsh assertions, the subsequent endeavor to soften which repeatedly leads him into apparent and indeed real contradictions ; such as must needs occur in the thoughts if not in the utterances of all who have been greatly tempted. But he is loud in acknowledging the wisdom of God, and at times allows himself to indulge in cheering hopes for the future. All this much excuses him, but cannot justify him ; and it is, therefore, greatly to his praise that when the true state of the case is set before him by Elihu, he remains silent, and ultimately acknowledges his fundamental error of justifying himself rather than God. Kitto.

3. He was angry at the friends because they had not been candid to Job. *They had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job* They had adjudged him to be a hypocrite, a wicked man, and would not recede from that sentence concerning him ; and yet they could not prove him so, nor disprove the evidences he produced of his integrity. They could not make good the premises, and yet held fast the conclusion. They had no reply to make to his arguments, and yet they would not yield. H.

6. Show you mine opinion, or, *to utter what I know in your presence.* The tone of the original is not boastful, but confident. Elihu does not speak of his opinion, but of what he knows, an inward conviction which it is his duty to utter. Cook.

7, 8. I said, Days should speak. I said, Those who had the experience of many years should be most able to teach wisdom to such as are younger ; but I see that all is not in age ; there is a Spirit of God which, breathing where it listeth, maketh a difference in men. Bishop H.

8. The verse may be rendered, *Truly it is the Spirit in man, and the breath of God, which giveth him (i.e., man collectively) understanding.* Elihu doubts not that the inward impulse which moves him to speak comes direct from God. Cook. —This understanding spirit is in every man ; it is the light that lighteth every man (John 1 : 9). It is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives us this understanding spirit ; for He is the Father of spirits, and Fountain of understanding. H.

It is the grand distinction of humanity that it is made permeable by the Divine nature, prepared in that manner to receive and entemple the Infinite Spirit, to be energized by Him and filled with His glory, in every faculty, feeling, and power. Consider what and how much it signifies that we are spirit, capable in this manner of the Divine concourse. In this point of view it is that we are raised most distinctly above all other forms of existence known to us. The will or force of God can act omnipotently on all created things as things. He can penetrate all central fires, and dissolve or assimilate every most secret atom of the world, but it cannot be said that these things receive Him ; nothing can truly receive Him but spirit. To be spirit, or to have a spiritual nature, is to be capable, not of duty only, but of receiving God, of being permeated, filled, ennobled by His Infinite Spirit. Bushnell.

We are responsible to God for our intellectual endowments. They came from Him, and are a trust for which we shall have to give account. Our first and plainest duty is to improve the intellect by wise and faithful culture. There is guilt in permitting such a gift to be wasted. The highest ministry of all in which the intellect can be engaged, to which by its Divine origin it is most urgently and imperatively called, is in direct connection with religion ; and it is here that intellectual responsibilities become most solemn and oppressive. It is the duty of the intellect to take its part in direct acts of worship. R. W. Dale. —Men have the faculty, but God gives the light. It is spiritual idolatry to lean to our own understanding. True wisdom is a Divine ray, and an emanation from God. Men never obtain it but in the way of an humble trust. When we

see our insufficiency, and God's all-sufficiency, *then* the Lord undertakes for us to direct us and guide us. When men think to relieve their souls by their own thoughts and care, they do but perplex themselves the more. God will be acknowledged—that is, consulted with, in all our undertakings or conflicts, or else we miscarry. T. M.

13, 14. Without respect of persons and without flattery, but with a single regard to the judgment of his Maker, he will hold an even balance between the friends and Job. He proposes to put the matter on an entirely new basis, one altogether different from that on which it had been placed by the friends, and against which Job had successfully aimed his arguments. W. H. G.

15-22. Turning from the three friends Elihu seems to speak in soliloquy and present to his own mind the singular situation: the three friends are discomfited before Job and reduced to silence; this should not be; therefore he will express his convictions. His breast is filled with thoughts and emotions that will not be repressed; he must speak that he may find relief. And he will speak fearlessly and in sincerity, not regarding the person of any man. A. B. D.

So far we have a vigorous and lively, but surely not presumptuous introduction to the discourses, which henceforth will be addressed exclusively to Job. Cook.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1 HOWBEIT, Job, I pray thee, hear my speech,
And hearken to all my words.
2 Behold now, I have opened my mouth,
My tongue hath spoken in my mouth.
3 My words *shall* utter the uprightness of my heart:
And that which my lips know they shall speak sincerely.
4 The spirit of God hath made me.
And the breath of the Almighty giveth me life.
5 If thou canst, answer thou me;
Set *thy words* in order before me, stand forth.
6 Behold, I am toward God even as thou art:
I also am formed out of the clay.
7 Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid,
Neither shall my pressure be heavy upon thee.
8 Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing,
And I have heard the voice of *thy words*, saying,
9 I am clean, without transgression;
I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me.
10 Behold, he findeth occasions against me,
He counteth me for his enemy;
11 He putteth my feet in the stocks,
He marketh all my paths.
12 Behold, I will answer thee, in this thou art not just;
For God is greater than man.
13 Why dost thou strive against him?
For he giveth not account of any of his matters.

14 For God speaketh once,
Yea twice, *though man* regardeth it not.
15 In a dream, in a vision of the night,
When deep sleep falleth upon men,
In slumberings upon the bed;
16 Then he openeth the ears of men,
And sealeth their instruction,
17 That he may withdraw man *from his* purpose,
And hide pride from man;
18 He keepeth back his soul from the pit,
And his life from perishing by the sword.
19 He is chastened also with pain upon his bed,
And with continual strife in his bones:
20 So that his life abhorreth bread,
And his soul dainty meat.
21 His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen;
And his bones that were not seen stick out.
22 Yea, his soul draweth near unto the pit,
And his life to the destroyers.
23 If there be with him a messenger,
An interpreter, one among a thousand,
To shew unto man what is right for him;
24 Then he is gracious unto him, and saith,
Deliver him from going down to the pit,
I have found a ransom.
25 His flesh shall be fresher than a child's;
He returneth to the days of his youth:
26 He prayeth unto God, and he is favourable unto him;
So that he seeth his face with joy:
And he restoreth unto man his righteousness.

27 He singeth before men, and saith,
 I have sinned, and perverted that which was
 right,
 And it profited me not :
 28 He hath redeemed my soul from going into
 the pit,
 And my life shall behold the light.
 29 Lo, all these things doth God work,
 Twice, *yea* thrice, with a man,
 30 To bring back his soul from the pit,

That he may be enlightened with the light
 of the living.

31 Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me :
 Hold thy peace, and I will speak.
 32 If thou hast any thing to say, answer me :
 Speak, for I desire to justify thee.
 33 If not, hearken thou unto me :
 Hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wis-
 dom.

THE following may be taken as an outline of the chapter : First (vs. 1-7), Elihu in some introductory words bespeaks Job's attention. He addresses Job by name, and, full of confidence in his ability to answer his complaints, invites him to attend to his words (vs. 1, 2), and assures him of his sincerity (vs. 3, 4). He desires Job to reply to him, for he is a man like himself, and has no imposing authority or presence to overpower Job, who had often complained that God's power overawed him and prevented him from justifying himself (vs. 5-7). Second (vs. 8-13), Elihu then refers to Job's complaint against God, reproducing passages from his speeches in which he said that God afflicted him unjustly though he was innocent ; that He displayed an arbitrary hostility to him, and refused to hear any appeal. Elihu refutes these charges by the general consideration (a favorite one with him) that to act in such a way is unworthy of God, who is greater than men and whose ways are unlike theirs. Third (vs. 13-28), taking up more formally Job's complaint that God refuses to answer man, Elihu replies that God does speak to man in many ways : *first* (vs. 14-18) in dreams, to instruct him and turn him away from pride and from sin that might end in death ; and *second* (vs. 19-28) by messengers in the midst of afflictions, who show to man what is right. If the sinner thus warned takes his instruction to heart he is restored to health and prosperity, and in his thankfulness shows publicly to men God's mercy, who hath not rewarded him according to his work. Finally (vs. 29-33), Elihu sums up the general lesson of his teaching regarding God in the preceding verses, and invites Job to reply to it, or if he cannot to listen in silence to further instruction. A. B. D.

2. Opened my mouth. The phrase so used always denotes careful, deliberate utterances on solemn occasions. **In my mouth,** or, palate ; *i.e.*, each word is as it were tasted ; carefully examined and approved before it is uttered by the tongue. The palate represents to the Hebrew the judgment of a sound mind,

which examines a thought impartially and thoroughly before it allows it to pass the tongue. This is the first reason why Job should hearken.

3. Two additional reasons, honesty of intention and simple, straightforward earnestness of language. The latter clause should be rendered, *My lips shall speak out what I know with sincerity.*

4. The chief reason of all, because the Spirit to whose creative act all wisdom must be ascribed, the breath of the Almighty, which made man a living soul, now quickeneth Elihu, *i.e.*, gives such life and power to his conviction that he is constrained to speak. *Cook.*

The Spirit of God hath made me.

At the first the soul of man was not produced by heaven or earth, but was breathed immediately from God ; so that the ways and proceedings of God with spirits are not included in the laws of heaven and earth ; but are reserved to the law of His secret will and grace wherein God worketh still, and resteth not from the work of redemption as He resteth from the work of creation ; but continueth working till the end of the world, when that work also shall be accomplished and an eternal Sabbath shall ensue. *Bacon.*—The words, " God created man in His own image," cannot mean less than that man was by creation endowed with the faculties requisite to intelligent and morally responsible action ; made capable of the conscious sense of duty—of learning what duty is, and of intelligently and voluntarily choosing obedience to its high and God-like behests. In these sublime and momentous elements of his created constitution he was made like God, in God's own image. Endowed with such capacities, it became possible that his body should be the temple of the Holy Ghost ; that he should be filled with the Spirit of God ; should be taught of God, comforted of God, replenished of the Spirit unto all holy affections, purposes, activities. So much both Scripture and human experience combine to prove as to the essential affinities of the human soul to the Divine. Man as toward God is *inspirable*—capable of being

inspired with the very thoughts of God, moulded morally by spiritual impulses coming forth from "the Father of our spirits." Moreover, through the agencies of the Divine Spirit upon the human soul, man is brought to act in full sympathy with God. "Filled with the Spirit," he may truly say: O God, my heart is with Thee; all its deep, irrepressible desires are toward and after Thee; all centre upon pleasing Thee and doing Thy will most perfectly. H. C.

This blessed influence from above is not of such rare occurrence as some suppose. It is everywhere. It falls upon every soul. Travel far as we may, hide ourselves in whatever dark place of the earth, we cannot go from the Spirit of the Almighty. And who would wish to go, who shall try to shut out the quickening, life-giving breath of the Divine Comforter from the soul? It will soothe in sorrow, it will strengthen in weakness, it will guide in perplexity. It will make the mind clear and the heart pure and the path of life plain. Amid all the troubles and disappointments of the world it will give a peace that passeth all understanding. D. M.

6. The lesson here taught is universally applicable. If this idea were treasured up in men's faith, it would restrain them from wronging, despising, or slandering one another. If they verily believe that their fellow-men are all and equally the subjects of God's love in Christ there would be an all-abounding charity among men. *Brentius.*

9-11. Elihu is justified in these statements; but he does little justice to Job's real inward conviction and frequent declarations, that he is conscious of natural sinfulness and many transgressions. *Cook.*—It was true that Job was a perfect and an upright man, and not such a one as his friends had represented him; but he ought not to have insisted so much upon it as if God had therefore done him wrong in afflicting him. Yet, it should seem, Elihu did not deal fairly in charging Job with saying that he was clean and innocent from all transgression, when he only pleaded that he was upright and innocent from the great transgression. But those that speak passionately and unwarily must thank themselves if they be misunderstood; they should have taken more care.

12. There is enough in this one plain, unquestionable truth, *That God is greater than man*, if duly improved, forever to put to silence and to shame all our complaints of His providence, and our exceptions against His dealings with us. He is not only more wise and power-

ful than we are, and therefore it is to no purpose to contend with Him, who will be too hard for us, but more holy, just, and good, for these are the transcendent glories and excellencies of the Divine nature; in these God is greater than man, and therefore it is absurd and unreasonable to find fault with Him, for He is certainly in the right. H.

13, 14. Knowing himself to be righteous, and still considering himself treated as an enemy by God, Job has frequently inquired, Why, then, does He treat me thus with enmity, and why has He brought me into being to be the mark of His attack? Job has longed for God's answer to these questions; and because God has veiled Himself in silence he has fallen into complaint against Him, as a ruler who governs according to His own sovereign, arbitrary will. Of all those things which are so mysterious in His rule He answers not, gives no account of them. Yet no; God does really speak with men, although not as Job desires when challenged in his own defence. D.

14. God speaketh. God has not left Himself without witness among us. In volume after volume He has spoken to us. In voice after voice He has made known His will—by His works which are all around us in the universe wherein we live; by His Word which He inspired into holy men of old; by that conscience which is the lamp lit by the Spirit in every soul of man; by history, which is the record of His dealing with nations; by experience, which is the pattern woven by His own hand in the web of our little lives. By these we all may know Him. *Farrar.*

God speaks distinctly, and, if necessary, repeatedly by His judgments, though men fail to understand their import. **15.** The first process by which God makes His will known. He awakens the conscience by inward communications in the dead silence of night, when man communes with his heart alone with God. **16.** Then God opens or uncovers their ears, *i.e.*, opens their minds to spiritual truth; and seal-eth their instruction or chastisement. "To seal" in scriptural language means to complete, or to appropriate, or to declare an appropriation. Here it means that God makes the man feel from Whom and for what purpose chastisement is sent. **17.** The real object is one of love, not of wrath, as Job and his opponents had throughout assumed. The chastisement is intended to make a man give up some wrong purpose and to put away all pride.

19-22. Elihu takes a second case: that of a man heavily afflicted, one suffering like Job

himself, and shows that here also the object is a loving one. *Cook.*

That which chiefly distressed Job was that God seemed to be treating him as an enemy. He had dwelt most pathetically upon this aspect of his case, which was so unaccountable to him and so dreadful. It is to the disabusing of his mind on this point, which was his radical error, that Elihu mainly addresses himself. Affliction, he tells him, is not a token of God's displeasure, but one of the measures of His grace. He sends sickness and suffering to recall men to the path of uprightness. And then if the sufferer recognizes this merciful intent of his sorrows, and yields himself up to it, his pains will be removed. Their whole design will be accomplished, and they will be needed no more. This is an entirely new doctrine, and exhibits the matter under a totally different aspect. The friends had seen in suffering nothing but the punishment of sin and the Divine displeasure against it. To Job's mind it was an arbitrary infliction, irrespective of men's deserts. But the idea of a gracious purpose in earthly distresses, the idea that they betoken the Divine benignity and love, and are meant to accomplish a kindly end, had not dawned upon either of them. *W. H. G.*

24. Then He is gracious unto him. God mercifully accepts his repentance, and saith, "Deliver him"—that is, he shall be delivered, "from going down to the pit." *Scott.*—**A ransom.** The word so interpreted means that which covers sin and saves the sinner from its penalty; hence a ransom or atonement. Elihu evidently speaks of a propitiatory offering; in whatever form that may be provided, he is sure that the reconciliation must be effected. We have a true, though it may be an undeveloped, anticipation of the truth afterward revealed. *Cook.*

I have found a ransom, says the Father; one fit to redeem man, a kinsman, one of that very same stock, the Son of man; one able to redeem man by satisfying Me, and fulfilling all I lay upon Him; *My Son, My only begotten Son, in whom My soul delighteth.* *L.*—Jesus Christ is that Ransom, for He is both the Purchaser and the Price, the Priest and the Sacrifice; so high was the value put upon souls, that nothing less would redeem them, and so great the injury done by sin, that nothing less would atone for it than the blood of the Son of God, who gave His life a ransom for many. This is a ransom of God's finding, a contrivance of infinite wisdom; we could never have found it ourselves, and the angels themselves could never have

found it; it is the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom; and such an invention as is and will be the everlasting wonder of those principalities and powers that desire to look into it. Observe how God glories in the invention here, "*I have found, I have found,* the Ransom, I, even I, am He that has done it."

H.—The Ransom came into the sinner's place that he might not perish, but live. And then the ransomed one belongs to the Ransomer. Thou art not thine own, but bought with a price; therefore glorify God in thy body and in thy spirit, which are God's. *J. Duncan.*

26. He prayeth unto God. The cure is given in answer to the sufferer's own prayer, and with restoration of health comes also the sense of God's favor. The restoration of his righteousness indicates the restoration of the afflicted one to God's favor; the whole passage is remarkable as anticipating the peculiar doctrine of justification by faith as specially taught in the New Testament. *Curry.*

27. A blessing or benefit is here promised on God's part, which is deliverance from the ill consequences and punishment of sin. But there is a condition required on our part: "If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not." In which words are contained, first, a penitent confession of our sins to God; secondly, a true contrition for our sin, not only for fear of the pernicious consequences and punishment that will follow it, but from a just sense of the evil nature of sin and the fault and offence of it against God. Thus a true and perfect contrition for our sins is made a necessary condition of our deliverance from the punishment due to them. *Archbishop Tillotson.*

Three heads of a long story of a sinful life. Mark the correctness of the man's view of sin. It is given in three particulars: 1. "I have sinned." I have transgressed the law, the commandment of Him who is my liege Lord, and to whom I belong. 2. There is a recognition, not only that the law is authoritative, but that the law is right: "I have perverted that which was right." Law, considered simply as law, is the will of a superior; but God's law is moral law, founded on the will of God, but having a ground in the nature of God. The law is the expression of God's moral perfections. 3. "And it profited me not." Sin is an unnatural, suicidal thing. It is contrary to the constitution and nature of man as it proceeded from the hands of God. *J. Duncan.*

29, 30. This is God's way of dealing with men, coming often to them, and though it may

be in chastisement, yet always with gracious designs. This was the lesson that both Job and the friends needed to learn, and Elihu is made their teacher instead of God, not to defend the Almighty, but to teach men that God is always righteous, though in many things His ways are past finding out. The "things" here referred to are those that have been enumerated in the preceding parts of Elihu's discourse, in which Job's confidence is rebuked, and God's judgments are shown to be both just and merciful. *Curry.*

The doctrine of Elihu is perfectly consistent with Job's true character as affirmed by God Himself; and it quite disarms Job, by showing that he has been neither unkindly nor unjustly dealt with. God is not treating him as a criminal nor as a foe, as he supposed, but is showing a solicitous regard for his highest good. Elihu's doctrine, that suffering was sent with a gracious design, and that it enclosed a real benefit, is not hampered by the rigid and inflexible rule of exact retributive justice maintained by the friends; nor does it conflict, as that did, with the general facts of Providence or with the consciousness of Job. Job's arguments and protests against the friends do not lie against it. It is not only consistent with, but gives a satisfactory account of the inequalities of human condition. This doctrine likewise supplies the hitherto undiscovered key to the enigma of Job's sufferings. No reflection is cast upon his integrity or the genuineness of his piety. His afflictions are neither an indication of the Lord's displeasure nor of His wanton hostility. A gracious God is by this severity of discipline purging away the dross which still adhered to His faithful servant, and refining the gold to a higher measure of purity. Accordingly, when Elihu pauses in his discourse to afford Job an opportunity for reply, he has nothing to say in opposition to what he has heard. It harmonizes his convictions respecting God with what has hitherto been inexplicable in His providence. It makes all plain in his own case, which has thus far been so dark and impenetrable. God has not been impeaching his integrity by the terrible sufferings which He has permitted. There is no hostile intent on the part of God; all has been done in kindness and love. *W. H. G.*

Verses 14-30. It is a feature of Job that while the whole book is a poem, there can be lifted out of it every here and there a passage

which is a small poem complete in itself. And in this thirty-third chapter there is (vs. 14-30) a hymn of experience which might have been to the Old Testament Church what "Rock of Ages" or "I once was a stranger" is to us. In v. 14 it commences, "For God speaketh once, yea twice;" and then, in twelve verses, the most vivid description is given of three ways in which God spoke or dealt with the spirits of men, four verses being devoted to each. The three ways are dreams, illness, and testimony.

I. Dreams or visions. This mode of dealing with the soul is described in vs. 15-18. In any collection of experiences you would be surprised to find in how many instances a dream or vision had played a decisive part; and this has been the case in the lives of not a few, who even in recent times have occupied prominent places in the building up of the kingdom of God. *Stalker.*—The history of the Church, from Origen down, is full of conversions through the instrumentality of dreams; and many of the best Christians have traced their better life to their leading. Bunyan tells us in his "Grace Abounding" how, at the time when it was his delight to be led captive by the devil, at his will, and he was so rooted in evil that it was a second nature to him, yet the Lord did not wholly desert him, but "did scare and frighten him with fearful visions." It was apparently through the influence of a dream that Elizabeth Fry was rescued from the indecision and doubt into which she fell after her conversion. John Newton's remarkable dream of the precious ring intrusted to him, heedlessly cast away, and restored and preserved for him by a stranger, is quite of the same character. He did not himself doubt that it was from God. We may further cite the case of Alexander Duff's dream of judgment, which threw him into earnest prayer for pardon, and was followed by what he long after described as something like the assurance of acceptance through the atoning blood of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Warfield.*

The state of the human mind in sleep is one of the great mysteries of existence. Many of those who have pondered on it most deeply have been led to the opinion that the mind never sleeps. There are few who cannot tell of some valuable impression which first visited them in sleep, and was worked out in their waking hours. Now why, among such impressions, should not religious ones have a place? We know that the forces of temptation are not idle while we sleep; for evil dreams, which pollute

the mind and lodge images in the memory that return in waking hours, are among the worst distresses of many a man who is striving to purify his soul. If, then, the powers of evil have access to the mind in sleep, to make impressions which do not end with sleep, why should not the Spirit of God have access to it at the same time, to touch it to fine and noble issues? Of course it would be easy to press this too far. If every religious notion or spectacle which may present itself to us in the dreaming state were to be regarded as an inspiration of the Spirit of God, the region of religious belief would be invaded by a destroying host of fancies and caprices. But there is a plain rule by which, if we observe it, we shall be guarded from such error. Nothing of a religious nature occurring to us in dreams has any weight or value if it be not in harmony with the Word of God. This rule will save us from everything like fanaticism. But if an impression which reaches us in dreams makes any truth or fact of God's Word more vivid and real to us, and disposes us to act in accordance with it, then we are justified in believing that there may be in our dream or vision a Divine intention and a leading of the Spirit.

II. *Illness.* What is said about this second mode of the Spirit's dealing (vs. 19-22) is remarkable for extraordinarily graphic touches. There is not, perhaps, in the whole compass of literature a more vivid description of illness. In v. 19 the phrase "the multitude of his bones" describes severe illness to the very life. In good health we scarcely know that we have bones; or at all events, we have no sense of the complexity of the osseous structure, for hidden under its comfortable coverings it does its work unfelt and as a whole. But in rheumatic fever and other maladies this wholeness is broken; we are conscious of every bone in our body, for there is a racking pain in every one of them, and we know what Job means by "the multitude of his bones." In v. 20 another feature of severe illness is given with equal vividness: "His life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat." Who that has experienced a prostrating illness does not remember this aversion to food? In v. 21 the aspect of the sick man is described at a later stage, as gaunt and deathlike, he raises himself up in bed, with sunken cheeks, hollow eyes, thin arms; or as, when he is not able for even this, he draws up his shrunken knees, and they look as if they would almost pierce the bed-clothes. As v. 22 says, "His soul draweth nigh unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers."

In those ancient days it was sometimes by

bringing a man into this condition that God spoke to him; and here, at any rate, there is nothing antiquated, for this is still a common way in which the Spirit of God deals with the spirit of man. To lay him down on a bed of trouble is often the only way in which God can get a man to think. There are many so involved in the rush and excitement of business that they have no time for serious thought, and others are so engrossed with the pursuit of the gayeties and follies of the world that though they have time enough for meditation, they have no taste for it. Is it not merciful if God lays such a man down in trouble? He is sequestered from company and forced to face his inner self, and he sees that it is mean, squalid, and unfurnished. Though he may have been becoming rich in worldly means, it has been at the expense of inner poverty. He sees all that he has been laboriously acquiring on the point of passing away from him, while he, divested of everything, is about to enter into the presence of God and give in his account. Or it may be in another form that the shadow of death appears in the home. Illness may fall on one who is near and dear; death may carry off the pride of a man's heart and the light of his eyes; and as he gazes after that which has been taken from him into the pale kingdom of death, and hears the mighty waters breaking far off on the shore of eternity, folly dies in him, and he turns round to estimate the prizes of life with sane and altered eyes. It is often in the vast silence which falls on the heart bereaved that the voice of God is heard; the body of one has to die that the soul of another may live; and thus on many a grave in the churchyard there bloom flowers of immortality.

III. *Testimony.* The third way in which the Spirit of God dealt in those ancient times with the spirit of man was through the testimony of one who, having been brought to God Himself, came to deal in God's name with those who were far from Him (vs. 23-26). Such a one is very remarkably described here. First, he is called "a messenger." He who deals with others about sin and God must be sent of God and bear a Divine message. If a preacher, for example, has not been with God before he comes forth to deal with man, he had better not come at all. Unless there be on his countenance a ray of that Divine light which is caught from intercourse with God, and in his heart a spark of that love which brought Christ Himself down from heaven to seek and save the lost, he had better keep out of such work altogether.

But the messenger of God receives a still pro-

founder name ; he is called “an interpreter.” God speaks to men, but they understand Him not. In His providence He speaks, and in His Word ; but the message rolls over the heads of those to whom it comes, till some one who knows the language draws their attention to it and tells them what it means. Even in illness the Divine voice is often not heard till an interpreter comes into the sick-room and says, This is what your suffering signifies. Indeed, this is supposed in this chapter itself ; for the interpreter comes on the scene because the two preceding voices of God have not been understood. The true interpreter hears the voice of God, and renders it in such a way as to win the attention and sympathy of the common man. This is, however, no common gift ; as the passage says, the interpreter is “one among a thousand.” Those who try to carry God’s message to sin-

ners are few and scattered. How many, even of professing Christians, are there who have any real passion for the salvation of the souls of men, or put forth any kind of sympathetic and original effort on their behalf ? Is the proportion greatly larger than one in a thousand ? Of the thousands of people whom any of us have met with in our journey through life, how few have seemed to be really concerned about our salvation, or have authentically interpreted God’s voices to us ? Yet the testimony of man to man is still the most effective means which the Spirit of God employs for doing His work in the human soul.

Such, then, are the three modes in which the Spirit of God dealt of old with the spirits of men, and in which He still deals with them. The first may be called rare, the second common, the third most common. *J. Stalker.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1 MOREOVER Elihu answered and said,
2 Hear my words, ye wise men ;
And give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.
3 For the ear trieth words,
As the palate tasteth meat.
4 Let us choose for us that which is right :
Let us know among ourselves what is good.
5 For Job hath said, I am righteous,
And God hath taken away my right :
6 Notwithstanding my right I am *accounted* a liar ;
My wound is incurable, *though I am* without transgression.
7 What man is like Job,
Who drinketh up scorning like water ?
8 Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity,
And walketh with wicked men.
9 For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing
That he should delight himself with God.
10 Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding :
Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness ;
And from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.
11 For the work of a man shall he render unto him,
And cause every man to find according to his way.

12 Yea, of a surety, God will not do wickedly,
Neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.
13 Who gave him a charge over the earth ?
Or who hath disposed the whole world ?
14 If he set his heart upon man,
If he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath ;
15 All flesh shall perish together,
And man shall turn again unto dust.
16 If now *thou hast* understanding, hear this :
Hearken to the voice of my words.
17 Shall even one that hateth right govern ?
And wilt thou condemn him that is just *and* mighty ?
18 Is it *fit* to say to a king, *Thou art* vile ?
Or to nobles, *Ye are* wicked ?
19 *How much less* to him that respecteth not the persons of princes,
Nor regardeth the rich more than the poor ?
For they all are the work of his hands.
20 In a moment they die, even at midnight ;
The people are shaken and pass away,
And the mighty are taken away without hand.
21 For his eyes are upon the ways of a man,
And he seeth all his goings.
22 There is no darkness, nor shadow of death,
Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.
23 For he needeth not further to consider a man,

That he should go before God in judgment.
 24 He breaketh in pieces mighty men *in ways*
 past finding out,
 And setteth others in their stead.
 25 Therefore he taketh knowledge of their
 works ;
 And he overturneth them in the night, so
 that they are destroyed.
 26 He striketh them as wicked men
 In the open sight of others ;
 27 Because they turned aside from following
 him,
 And would not have regard to any of his
 ways :
 28 So that they caused the cry of the poor to
 come unto him,
 And he heard the cry of the afflicted.
 29 When he giveth quietness, who then can
 condemn ?
 And when he hideth his face, who then can
 behold him ?

Chap. 34. Having in chap. 33 replied to Job's charge that God's afflictions were examples of an arbitrary hostility to men, Elihu in this chapter replies to another charge, that God was unjust in the afflictions which He laid on him. His answer is, That a motive for injustice in Him who is Creator of all cannot be found ; and, That injustice in the Ruler of all is inconceivable—shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? The line of thought in the chapter is something as follows : First (vs. 1-4), in a brief introduction Elihu invites his intelligent hearers to listen further to him, and to unite with him in seeking to discover what was the right, the just state of the case, in Job's cause with God and his charges against Him. Second (vs. 5-9), these charges he recites : Job had said that God perverted his right, and that he was incurably afflicted though he had done no wrong (vs. 5, 6). Elihu cannot mention such charges without expressing his detestation of them : Job has not his parallel for impiety (vs. 7, 8). He has even gone the length of saying that it was no advantage to a man to be religious (v. 9). This last sentiment Elihu does not deal with in the present chapter, its discussion follows in chap. 35. Third (vs. 10-20), coming to his argument Elihu, *first* expresses his reprobation of such sentiments as those of Job, they are contrary to right thoughts of God ; such ways of acting are not to be thought of in connection with the Almighty (vs. 10-12). *Second*, this reproof of Job's charges from God's nature in general Elihu then particularizes into two

Alike whether *it be done* unto a nation, or
 unto a man :
 30 That the godless man reign not,
 That there be none to ensnare the people.
 31 For hath any said unto God,
 I have borne *chastisement*, I will not offend
any more :
 32 That which I see not teach thou me :
 If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more ?
 33 Shall his recompence be as thou wilt, that
 thou refusest it ?
 For thou must choose, and not I :
 Therefore speak what thou knowest.
 34 Men of understanding will say unto me,
 Yea, every wise man that heareth me :
 35 Job speaketh without knowledge,
 And his words are without wisdom.
 36 Would that Job were tried unto the end,
 Because of his answering like wicked men.
 37 For he addeth rebellion unto his sin,
 He clappeth his hands among us,
 And multiplieth his words against God.

distinct thoughts : 1. No motive for injustice in Him who is the Creator of all can be discovered ; on the contrary, His calling all things into being and upholding them by sending forth His Spirit is evidence of unselfish goodness, for were He to set His mind on Himself and withdraw His Spirit all flesh would perish (vs. 13-15). 2. The foundation of government is justice, without which rule would come to an end. Injustice in the highest Ruler is inconceivable. And in truth His rule approves itself by its impartiality to be just (vs. 16-20). Fourth (vs. 21-28), this justice is secured by God's omniscient insight into men, and by His goodness which is the spring and motive of His rule of mankind. Fifth (vs. 29-33), shall any one then murmur at this absolute disposing of all things by the hand of God ? To murmur is to usurp the rule of God, and to claim to dictate how He should dispense His recompenses. Finally (vs. 34-37), Elihu, having shown what is involved in Job's charges of injustice against God, draws the conclusion, in which he is confident all reflecting minds who listen to him will concur with him, that Job speaks without wisdom ; to the sin of his life he has added a defiant and mocking impiety, which one must wish to see purified out of him in the furnace of severer afflictions. A. B. D.

7. A strong assertion that Job had given way to his feelings without restraint, that instead of shrinking from the temptation, he had greedily absorbed the bitter draught of scorn. Elihu goes now, for the first time, far beyond the

truth. There was bitterness, even fierceness in Job's remonstrances, but the words were wrung from him by agony and by the taunts of his unfriendly counsellors; his scorn was altogether directed against them, not, as Elihu seems to assume, against God.

9. See 9 : 22 ; 21 : 7 ; 24 : 1, and other passages, stating or implying the same thing. Elihu, however, does scanty justice to Job, who repeatedly asserts that such facts are matters of perplexity, not that they really represent the principles of the Divine government. *Cook.*

10-12. In direct and broad contradiction of what Job had said, Elihu now proceeds to deny each and all of the charges of wrongdoing alleged against God, and to declare that He deals righteously with men, and recompenses to every man *according to his ways*—his conduct and character. He asserts God's infinite righteousness as proof that whatever He may do must be right, though His reasons may not appear even to the wisest of men. *Curry.*

10. There are and will be difficulties in the administration of providence; but these difficulties can never make reasonable and considerate persons, men of attention and understanding, to doubt concerning the righteousness of the Divine government. A righteous and just man may be depended upon that he will not do an unjust thing; much more, therefore, "far be it from the Almighty, far be it from the Supreme Lord and Governor of all things, that He should commit iniquity." Many things mysterious, many things incomprehensible, there needs must be in the nature of the Supreme Being; but injustice or iniquity, hard or unrighteous dealing with any of His creatures—this, above all things, far ought we to keep it from all our notions and conceptions of Him. Objections will be started and difficulties arise, but whether we can answer them or no, we are sure they must be false; because no evidence in proof of any particular doctrine inconsistent with this notion can be so strong as are the arguments which prove in general the truth of the Divine justice. *S. Clarke.*

If at any time we have any unbecoming thoughts of the justice of God, either that He afflicts the good without reason or prospers the wicked against it, all this ariseth from our ignorance or the shortness of our sight. We have not a full or perfect prospect of things; we see but a little way backward; we are not wise to compare what is past with what is present, nor can we at all infallibly foresee anything future or discern what shall be. Whereas God at once hath all things before Him; He seeth what is

past as well as what is present, and what shall be hereafter as well as what hath been; and so the completeness and indefectibility of His own justice in all. And when we in the great day shall see all the works of God in the world brought and presented together as in one view, we shall then say, from the evidence of sight as now we ought from the evidence of faith, that the Almighty hath not in any one thing perverted judgment. And therefore the apostle doth most appositely call that day "The day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." *Caryl.*

11. *The work of a man shall he render unto Him.* Good works shall be rewarded, and evil works either punished or satisfied for; so that sooner or later in this world or in that to come He will cause every man to find according to his ways. This is the standing rule of distributive justice, to give to every man according to his works. *Say to the righteous, it shall be well with them; woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him.* If services persevered in now go unrewarded and sins persisted in now go unpunished, yet there is a day coming when God will fully render to every man according to his works, with interest for the delay. *H.*—Let us, then, cultivate the sense of stewardship. It is a very hard thing for us to keep fresh the feeling that all which we are and have is given to us, and that not for ourselves, but for God. The beginning of evil is the weakening of that sense of responsibility, and the dawning of the dream that we are our own. The prodigal son's downfall began with saying, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." And the next step came naturally after that: "He gathered all together and went away into a far country." And the next step came just as naturally after that: "He wasted his substance in riotous living." If sense of stewardship and responsibility is weakened within us, the main-spring of all good is weakened within us, and we shall become self-willed, self-indulgent, self-asserting, God-forgetting. If we think that the talent or the pound is ours, we shall spend it for our own purposes, and that is "waste." And is it not a sad commentary on the tendency of human nature to forget stewardship, and to lose the impression of responsibility, that that very word "talents," which is borrowed from Christ's parable, is used in common speech without the slightest sense that it suggests anything about stewardship, faithfulness, or reckoning? Let us, then, take care to cultivate the sense of responsibility. *A. M.*

13-15. Elihu first lays down the simple

proposition that the Almighty is just in all His dealings. He then proceeds to prove it. The first proof is the absoluteness of God's government. "Who hath given him a charge?" The inference to be drawn is that God administers the government out of His own free will; He is not, like the subordinate duties of the heathen, merely in possession of a delegated authority; He has none to consult; when we reach Him we reach the last, highest, absolute source of all justice. *Cook.*

Elihu says this to assert God's sovereignty, and the bearing of this on the main argument is, if God be sovereign and amenable to no superior, then He can have no motive for doing what is otherwise than right. *Carey.*—If the Lord be supreme, then let us set Him up as supreme in all things. Let His ends be above our ends. Let us design God in all we do. He who is over all ought to be honored by all. All our actions, as so many lines, ought to centre in His honor who is the centre of power. *Caryl.*

13-15. The first thought of Elihu is that the earth, the world, is not intrusted to God by another; He Himself arranged it all as it is; there is therefore no motive to injustice. This is one side of His ideas; the other (v. 14) is that the fact of the creation and sustaining of all things and creatures by God is proof of unselfish benevolence, for if God thought of Himself, and ceased to send forth His Spirit, all flesh would perish. A. B. D.

16-30. The second proof that God deals justly is, that as a matter of fact He deals with all men impartially; princes and people, rich and poor, are alike in His sight; none of their works escape Him; He overthrows the powerful oppressor, hears the cry of the afflicted, and overthrows the hypocrite. Elihu's argument here is not new; it has been partly anticipated by Job's friends, and far more broadly and strongly stated by Job himself; at the same time there is so much reverence, so deep a conviction that God's almightiness and omniscience are essentially one with righteousness, that the address is calculated to prepare Job for the final manifestation of God Himself. *Cook.*

16-19. The thought is, without justice rule is impossible; and therefore injustice in the Supreme Ruler is inconceivable. The thought is one that finds repeated expression in Scripture, as in the words of Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" and in those of Paul, "Is God unrighteous? God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?" A. B. D.—Nowhere in the book, except in

the address of the Almighty, are there to be found grander ethical and theological ideas; God *cannot* do wrong; He cannot be a despiser of right who binds the world in harmony; His very continuance of man and the world shows this; oh, that Job's sufferings would allow him to see it! Nothing in the speeches of Eliphaz and Zophar comes up to this. *T. Lewis.*

20-28. God's strict justice may be seen in His government of the peoples and their princes alike. His justice is unerring, for it is guided by omniscient insight. Punishing oppression, it avenges the cause of the poor and afflicted. A. B. D.

20. They die. What cannot He do that has all the powers of death at His command? Observe the suddenness of this destruction. *In a moment they die.* It is not a work of time with God.

21, 22. God is omniscient, and can discover that which is most secret. As the strongest cannot oppose His arm, so the most subtle cannot escape His eye; and therefore, if some are punished either more or less than we think they should be, instead of quarrelling with God, it becomes us to ascribe it to some secret cause known to God only. For everything is open before Him. *His eyes are upon the ways of man;* not only they are within reach of His eye, so that He can see them, but His eye is upon them, so that He actually observes and inspects them; He sees us all and sees all our goings; go whither we will we are under His eye; all our actions, good and evil, are regarded and recorded and reserved to be brought into judgment when the books shall be opened. Nothing is or can be concealed from Him. *There is no darkness nor shadow of death* so close, so thick, so solitary, so remote from light or sight, as that in it the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from the discovering eye and avenging hand of the righteous God. H.

25-30. This continues the thought that dominates what has gone before—that is, that because of God's omniscience He knows every man's actions, and that His omnipotence is actively engaged in works of retributive judgment, overthrowing the wicked in their evil designs, avenging the cause of the poor, and by His authority establishing peace, so *that the godless may not reign*—that crime and violence shall not prosper. *Curry.*

29. The frowns of all the world cannot trouble those whom God quiets with His smiles. If God give outward peace to a nation, He can secure what He gives, and disable the enemies of it to give it any disturbance. If God give

inward peace to a man only, the quietness and everlasting assurance which are the effect of righteousness, neither the accusations of Satan nor the afflictions of this present time, no, nor the arrests of death itself can give trouble. The smiles of all the world cannot quiet those whom God troubles with His frowns ; for if He in displeasure hide His face, and withhold the comfort of His favor, *who then can behold Him?*—that is, who can behold a displeased God so as to bear up under His wrath or turn it away. H.

29, 30. So completely is man dependent upon God, for good or ill, that the word of peace from God is above all creature power to bring condemnation, while only the hiding His face, which none can hinder, is death. So God deals with men and nations, and because He is righteous the godless shall not triumph, nor the people always suffer. *Curry.*

31-33. Elihu gradually approaches the conduct of Job. He supposes the case of one inadvertent on the Divine procedure and complaining of unjust affliction. This is presumption, and implies that one usurps the government of the Most High. A supposition is put : Has any one said unto God ? where *God* is emphatic, the emphasis implying the unseemliness and presumption of the act. The case is put generally, but the case is that of Job, as v. 33 reveals. The meaning of the passage is that the complainer under affliction protests his innocence (v. 31) ; disclaims knowledge of any offence ; desires, as Job frequently expressed his desire, to know what his sin was ; and professes his readiness to desist from it, when it is made clear to him (v. 32). Elihu's answer to this complaint (v. 33) is that it is a claim to regulate the government of God, to give laws to Him how He shall act, and to decide how He shall recompense. Such a position the complainer takes—but for himself Elihu repudiates it : *Thou must choose, not I.* In the concluding words, *speaking that which thou knowest*, Elihu invites Job to state that method of “recompense” which shall be “according to his mind” and better than that observed in God's rule of the world. A. B. D.

32. That which I see not teach Thou me. What we all want is direct teaching—the teaching of Almighty God. God has many lesson-books out of which He teaches. But the Teacher Himself is always apart from and above the lesson-book. The power is all in His secret agency. That instructs ; that elevates. It is a real, personal God, using all, pervading all, impressing all, a spirit working with

the spirit of a man. There is only one way to secure God's own teaching. You must go into that school with clean hands and a pure heart. Over the portal of the palace of truth is the inscription—as strict in its stipulation as it is large in its undertaking—“If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” J. V.

I will do iniquity no more. A gracious heart is willing to know and see the worst of himself. He would have God teach him what iniquity he hath done. A godly man never thinks he seeth his sin enough. How little soever he sins, he thinks he sins too much, and how much soever he sees his sin, he thinks he sees it too little. *Caryl.*—Lavish and liberal as the Gospel is of its forgiveness for the past, it has no toleration either for the purposes or for the practices of sin for the future. The same Gospel which sheds an oblivion over the sinfulness of the past enters upon a war of extermination against all future sinfulness. It cannot be said of us that grace has abounded unto the forgiveness of our sins, unless there be seen in us an honest and determined habit of exertion against the continuance of sin. T. C.

33. As Thou wilt? God will take His own way, fulfil His own counsel, and recompense according to the sentence of His own justice, whether thou art pleased or displeased ; He will neither ask thy leave nor thy advice, but what He pleases that will He do ; it is therefore thy wisdom to *make the best of that which is*, because it is out of thy power to make it otherwise. If thou pretend to choose and refuse—that is, to prescribe to God, and except against what He does, so will not I, I will acquiesce in all He does. H.

No one has *all* he wishes or exactly *what* he wishes. Many have a great deal in the life-lot which they deprecate, object to, resent, and strive against with all their might, albeit in vain. If the will is strong and the view of life and duty defined and decisive, then between the soul and events there will be continual collision. There will be toiling and fretting ; the building up again of things which have been cast down, a looking about for things that are wanting, vain regrets for what is lost, and a constant wonder, animated almost by a sense of injury, that things *will not* take their right shape—all this will be, *unless* there shall come in, happily, the explanation and corrective of a trustful faith, of true religion—unless the baffled one shall take time and thought, and quietly put to himself the question, “But *should* it be

according to my will?" If things were "according to our will," all the rain and all the darkness would be at once swept away, and the realms of pure enjoyment opened, and the sun of the eternal summer set high in the heavens, never to be obscured again. Not so does God arrange the seasons and times of our growing. Not such is His preparation of His children for the good things He has prepared for them. The thorn, the wilderness, the cross—hunger, and cold, and thirst, and weariness—such things as these, mingled no doubt with their opposites, are like the signs and finger-posts of the old consecrated way. A short new way into the land of promise, green and flowery, by the banks of murmuring streams, and under the shadow of the woods, has never been discovered. It is still the old way, across the sands, among the rocks, hither and thither, as the cloud may move. Of course we form our opinion of things as they happen, and take our measures for safe journeying day by day, according to the wisdom we have. But the supreme wisdom is always this—that we shall have our eye upon the cloud, and hold ourselves ready for movement along the line where the shadow of it passes; or where its fire burns. "Thy will" is, *not* to move; but you must—for see! the cloud is moving. "Thy will" is, to stay no longer here. 'Tis high time you were up and away. Nay, not so fast; for see! there is no movement from on high. All is yet

quiet and still. And *should* it be, then, according to thy will? *Raleigh.*

How it would smooth the troubled sea if we would yield ourselves to be borne peacefully on its waves, instead of entering into contest with its surges! It is our self-will, our controversy with events, or rather with God, that is the grand source of our unhappiness under the trials that befall us. Oh, could we set God always before us; could we live surrounded by the visible forms of His perfections and make our will one with His, how it would soothe and cheer this weary pilgrimage on earth! In the darkest hour and amid all the terrors and dismay of the heaviest tempest, light would beam upon us from the eternal throne; and that voice be heard: "It is *I*, be not afraid!" Trusting in God, I can stand on a falling universe and triumph there. *N. W. Taylor.*

36, 37. Elihu's judgment of Job extends far beyond the mere bearing of the latter under his afflictions; it embraces Job's former life. And the language exceeds in harshness almost anything that the three friends had said. A. B. D. —Harsh as the words are, they are not without some justification. Elihu, of course, could not see into Job's heart, and his offence at the tone of Job's expostulations was natural. His own conviction that all chastisements proceed from love necessarily involved the condemnation of one who could see in them nothing but indications of enmity. *Cook.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

1 MOREOVER Elihu answered and said,
2 Thinkest thou this to be *thy* right,
Or sayest thou, My righteousness is more
than God's,
3 That thou sayest, What advantage will it
be unto thee?
And, What profit shall I have, more than if
I had sinned?
4 I will answer thee,
And thy companions with thee.
5 Look unto the heavens, and see;
And behold the skies, which are higher than
thou.
6 If thou hast sinned, what doest thou against
him?
And if thy transgressions be multiplied,
what doest thou unto him?

7 If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?
Or what receiveth he of thine hand?
8 Thy wickedness *may hurt* a man as thou art;
And thy righteousness *may profit* a son of
man.
9 By reason of the multitude of oppressions
they cry out;
They cry for help by reason of the arm of
the mighty.
10 But none saith, Where is God my Maker,
Who giveth songs in the night;
11 Who teacheth us more than the beasts of
the earth,
And maketh us wiser than the fowls of
heaven?
12 There they cry, but none giveth answer,
Because of the pride of evil men.

13 Surely God will not hear vanity,
Neither will the Almighty regard it.
14 How much less when thou sayest thou be-
holdest him not,
The cause is before him, and thou waitest
for him !

15 But now, because he hath not visited in his
anger,
Neither doth he greatly regard arrogance ;
16 Therefore doth Job open his mouth in van-
ity ;
He multiplieth words without knowledge.

ELIHU proceeds to deal with the assertion that a life of righteousness had brought Job no corresponding blessings ; he argues that man's righteousness constitutes no claim upon God (vs. 1-8) ; and that when God disregards appeals to His justice it is because they are urged without humility and faith (vs. 9-13) ; hence the duty of submitting to Him with full trust in His justice. *Cook*.—Job's complaint that under God's government of the world it availed a man nothing to be righteous, to which Elihu had referred (34 : 9), is now taken up and disposed of. The passage has three parts : 1. (vs. 1-4) Elihu states Job's complaint that godliness avails a man nothing, and undertakes to answer it. 2. (vs. 5-8) his answer. Neither godliness nor irreligiousness can affect God, who is too exalted to be touched by anything human. Their influence therefore must be on men, to their advantage or hurt. 3. (vs. 9-16) having made this philosophical retort, Elihu proceeds to dispose of some cases that might seem exceptions to his principle or anomalies. There are cases where apparently religious men are not heard when they cry to God ; men cry out because of oppression and there is no answer. But why ? Because they cry amiss. Their appeal to heaven is the mere instinctive cry of suffering like that of the lower creatures, without trust in God—they say not, Where is God my Maker ? And Elihu ends, as before, with a charge of foolish talking.

1-4. Throughout Elihu's speeches there runs the idea of a cause or plea between Job and God. Job is regarded by Elihu as maintaining that he has a right or just cause against God. Elihu here asks, if Job considers that the rectitude of his cause will appear in his maintaining that godliness profits a man nothing ?—the word "this" in v. 2, refers to the questions in v. 3. If Job could successfully maintain this contention his cause against God would be good. Therefore Elihu controverts his assertion, contending that righteousness does avail a man, as it must. *A. B. D.*

5. Look unto the heavens. This is a sublime sentiment in a plain dress. One view, says he, of the magnificent scenery of the lofty sky will extinguish all low conceptions of its Almighty Author. It will strike the mind

with a vast idea of His infinite superiority to all other beings, and of the impossibility of His gaining or suffering by the good or bad behavior of His reasonable creatures. *Scott*.

6. If thou sinnest, what dost thou hurt Him ? Is His holiness, justice, power the less, because thou hast transgressed ? Is aught diminished from His essence by this offence ? *Bishop H.*

6-8. The drift of this is that there is no such relation between God and man as to make happiness a reward due to righteousness. When granted, it is a matter of favor and grace ; when withdrawn, complaints imply a wrong conception of our position before God. *Cook*.—What objection should Job raise in justification of his complaints concerning his affliction against such sentiments as these—that goodness bears its reward and evil its punishment in itself, and that God's reward of goodness is not a work of indebtedness, nor His punishment of evil a work of self-defence. Before such truth he must hold his peace. *A. B. D.*

7. The great God cannot possibly receive any benefit by man, and therefore cannot be supposed to lie under any obligation to man ; for if He be obliged by His purpose and promise it is only to Himself. That is a challenge which no man can take up (Rom. 11 : 35). *Who hath first given to God let him prove it, and it shall be recompensed to him again.* Why should we demand it as a just debt to gain by our religion (as Job seemed to do), when the God we serve does not gain by it ?—**8.** To men like ourselves we are in a capacity either of doing injury or of showing kindness. And in both these the sovereign Lord and Judge of all will interest Himself, will reward those that do good and punish those that do hurt to their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects. *H.*

9. The oppressed cry, saith Elihu, but not with a right frame of heart ; they cry rather as oppressed with the weight of their own sufferings, than as touched with a sense of their sins, or as having faith in Him for their deliverance, or quiet submission to His will ; these may either be said not to pray at all, or they pray not with such holy aims and designs, with such integrity and uprightness of heart as become the people of God. They pray under the control of impatience, or moved with envy at the

power of their adversaries, or with a desire of the utmost revenge ; and therefore God takes no notice of their prayers (vs. 12, 13). “ There they cry, but none giveth answer ; surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.” *Caryl*.—If the cries of the oppressed be not heard the fault is not in God, He is ready to hear and help them ; but the fault is in themselves ; they *ask and have not*, but it is *because they ask amiss* (James 4 : 3). *They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty*, but it is a complaining cry, a wailing cry, not a penitent, praying cry, the cry of nature and passion, not of grace. They do not inquire after God nor seek to acquaint themselves with Him under their affliction (v. 10). *But none saith, Where is God my Maker ?* Afflictions are sent to direct and quicken us to *inquire early after God* (Psalm 78 : 34). But many that groan under great oppressions never mind God nor take notice of His hand in their troubles ; if they did they would bear their troubles more patiently and be more benefited by them. Of the many that are afflicted and oppressed, few get the good they might get by their affliction. It should drive them to God ; but how seldom is this the case !

10. He *gives songs in the night*—that is, when our condition is ever so dark, and sad, and melancholy, there is that in God, in His providence and promise, which is sufficient not only to support us, but to fill us with joy and consolation, and enable us in everything to give thanks, and even to rejoice in tribulation. *H.*—Those who raise these songs of praise are believers under severe trial ; pilgrims amid gloom, who cannot see a step before them. There is many a night in and around us in which a dirge appears infinitely more natural than a joyous song. It is much if we can hold our peace to God in the dark hours ; more when we pray under suffering ; but to sing songs, how much deeper the faith ! Verily, such songs in the night relieve the suffering heart and strengthen it to bear that which would otherwise be intolerable. *It is God who gives these songs*, first in the heart, and in His own good time in the mouth ; who else but He can give them ? and again, what can He give higher than this ? Blessed is he who through faith has learned to see in God his Maker, and in this Maker the Rock of his salvation ! *Van O.*

12, 13. “ There ”—that is, in that state of mind, without piety and faith, so that although they really suffer wrong their cry is but vanity, and is therefore disregarded. Elihu thus meets the reiterated complaints of Job that his cry is

unanswered. *Cook*.—They are proud still, *therefore* they do not seek unto God (Psalm 10 : 4) ; or if they do cry unto Him, *therefore* He does not give answer, for He hears only the *desire of the humble* (Psalm 10 : 17). They are not sincere and upright and inward with God in their supplications to Him, and therefore He does not hear and answer them. The case is plain, then, if we cry to God for the removal of the oppression and affliction we are under and it is not removed, the reason is not because the Lord’s hand is shortened or His ear heavy, but because the affliction has not done its work ; we are not sufficiently humbled, and therefore must thank ourselves that it is continued. *H.*

God will not hear vanity. A worldly spirit hinders prayer. Let one be bent on the accumulation of *property* ; let the most sensitive part about him on which you can lay your finger be his purse ; let his meditations be upon the best means of making ten dollars a hundred, and his labors be to effect this transformation, and he will have but little time and thought for prayer. Let one be eager for *style* in houses or furniture or equipage or dress, studying continually in any or all of these particulars to be as good as the best, selecting and rejecting and arranging not in obedience to a law of self-respect and convenience and pure taste, but with a reference to the judgment of others and the eye of the world, and the spirit of prayer will have narrow quarters in that heart. Let one be devoted to the *amusements* of society, the things invented to make time pass quickly and pleasantly, the gayeties and frivolities of idle circles, the modes of fashionable entertainment, and there will be little relish left for prayer. The form of it may be kept up, but the spirituality of it will be at a low ebb indeed. Let one be greatly absorbed in political contests, watching with intensest interest the movements of the hostile parties, in every part of the field, punctual at all the gathering places of those with whom he sides and votes, and the probability is, that he will have little ardor to spare for the cause of Christ, and there is danger that the thing which takes such strong hold of him will hinder his prayers. *Anon.*

15, 16. God is not always exhibiting His special vengeance against the *multiplicity* of human sins. He is “ not strict to mark iniquity,” or He would be always striking. Besides His longsuffering, so often spoken of in the Old Testament, there is the great (final) judgment always before Him. No cause is really forgotten. There is a greatness in Elihu’s

views unsurpassed by anything in the book outside of the Divine address, and that is a sufficient answer to those who would argue the spuriousness of this portion, because there is no mention of his being answered with the rest. *T. Lewis.*

CHAPTER XXXVI., 1-25.

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| <p>1 ELIHU also proceeded, and said,
 2 Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee ;
 For I have yet somewhat to say on God's behalf.
 3 I will fetch my knowledge from afar,
 And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
 4 For truly my words are not false :
 One that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.
 5 Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any :
 He is mighty in strength of understanding.
 6 He preserveth not the life of the wicked :
 But giveth to the afflicted <i>their</i> right.
 7 He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous :
 But with kings upon the throne
 He setteth them for ever, and they are exalted.
 8 And if they be bound in fetters,
 And be taken in the cords of affliction ;
 9 Then he sheweth them their work,
 And their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves proudly.
 10 He openeth also their ear to instruction,
 And commandeth that they return from iniquity.
 11 If they hearken and serve <i>him</i>,
 They shall spend their days in prosperity,
 And their years in pleasures.
 12 But if they hearken not, they shall perish by the sword,
 And they shall die without knowledge.
 13 But they that are godless in heart lay up anger :
 They cry not for help when he bindeth them.</p> | <p>14 They die in youth,
 And their life <i>perisheth</i> among the unclean.
 15 He delivereth the afflicted by his affliction,
 And openeth their ear in oppression.
 16 Yea, he would have led thee away out of distress
 Into a broad place, where there is no straitness ;
 And that which is set on thy table should be full of fatness.
 17 But thou art full of the judgment of the wicked :
 Judgment and justice take hold <i>on thee</i>.
 18 Let not wrath stir thee up against chastisements ;
 Neither let the greatness of the ransom turn thee aside.
 19 Will thy riches suffice, <i>that thou be</i> not in distress,
 Or all the forces of <i>thy</i> strength ?
 20 Desire not the night,
 When peoples are cut off in their place.
 21 Take heed, regard not iniquity :
 For this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.
 22 Behold, God doeth loftily in his power :
 Who is a teacher like unto him ?
 23 Who hath enjoined him his way ?
 Or who can say, Thou hast wrought unrighteousness ?
 24 Remember that thou magnify his work,
 Whereof men have sung.
 25 All men have looked thereon ;
 Man beholdeth it afar off.</p> |
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CHAPS. XXXVI., XXXVII. ELIHU'S FOURTH SPEECH.

IN his former speeches Elihu was intent upon correcting the false principles in regard to God enunciated by Job ; in his present speech he keeps still before him the same great object—namely, to present just thoughts of God ; but having in the former speeches corrected the false ideas of Job, he proceeds now more positively to present his own elevated conceptions of the Creator. The object of the passage is to

extol the greatness of God in all His operations, both among men and in the world. Thus the passage falls into two parts: First (36 : 1-25), in which the greatness of God in His providential treatment of men is extolled. Here the speaker gives a fuller statement of his theory of the meaning of the afflictions sent on men by God (vs. 1-15), and exhorts Job to recognize God's purpose in his sufferings, and to unite with all men in exalting Him. Second (36 : 26-33 ; 37 : 1-24), in which the greatness,

wisdom, and unsearchableness of God, as these are manifested in the phenomena of the heavens, are magnified, and Job is exhorted to lay these great wonders to heart and to bow beneath the wisdom and power of God, who far transcends man's comprehension.

Chap. 36 : 1-25. *God's gracious designs in afflicting men ; and exhortation to Job to unite with all men in extolling His greatness.* First (vs. 1-4). In some words of introduction Elihu beseeches Job to listen to him still further, for he has yet something to say on God's behalf ; and he will speak what is true, for he has perfect knowledge. Second (vs. 5-15). Then he proceeds to his theme—the greatness of God, a greatness of mind and understanding, which does not despise the weak but rules all with goodness and wisdom. Afflictions are but instances of this gracious wisdom, for by them He opens the ear of men to instruction. Third (vs. 16-25), application of this doctrine of the meaning of afflictions to Job—God is through them alluring him into a prosperous and happy life. And the speaker adds a warning against murmuring, and an exhortation to adore and magnify as all men do the great God.

3. Righteousness to my Maker. Elihu gives here in a word the ruling idea of his discourses ; they are all meant to ascribe righteousness or right to God ; they are a defence of God against the charges of Job. The expression rendered *my Maker* does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament. A. B. D.

4. Perfect in knowledge. By this Elihu means that he speaks with a perfect conviction of the truth of his arguments ; perfectness means honesty, integrity, and is a word often applied to good men, to Job, for instance, both by himself and by the Lord.

5. Despiseth not any. This refers to Job's reproaches of God for neglecting and despising his cause. No created being is too mean to be regarded by Him. *Cook.*—*God despises not any ;* which is a good reason why we should honor all men. He is mighty in strength and wisdom, and yet does not look with contempt upon those that have but a little strength and wisdom if they but mean honestly. Nay, *therefore* He despises not any, because His wisdom and strength are incontestably infinite ; therefore, the condescensions of His grace can be no diminution to Him. They that are wise and good will not look upon any with scorn and disdain.

7. He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous. Though they may seem sometimes neglected and forgotten, and that befalls them

which looks like an oversight of Providence, yet the tender, careful eye of their Heavenly Father never withdraws from them. If our eye be ever toward God in duty, His eye will be ever upon us in mercy, and when we are at the lowest will not overlook us. H.—God's unceasing watchfulness over the righteous is shown equally in their prosperity and in their adversity. The words "with kings upon the throne" describe the ordinary, and in all cases the final result of God's love to the righteous ; they are kings and priests to their God, inheritors of His kingdom. Elihu's words are even more true than he knows. *Cook.*—How significant is this in a Christian sense, now that God has made the humble and meek to "sit together with Christ Himself in heavenly places," and Christ, who is King of kings, says, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me on My throne." *Wordsworth.*

8-12. Elihu reverts again to his fundamental principle of the design of suffering, making special application of it to the case of Job. Afflictions, he repeats, are sent upon the righteous for their good ; and such an experience is fraught with solemn responsibility to the afflicted themselves. If they recognize the gracious purpose of God in their sorrows, and heed the lesson they involve, then the design of this painful dispensation will be accomplished, and it will be itself removed. If, on the contrary, they disregard the voice of love and warning which speaks to them in these distresses, they will incur the Divine displeasure and bring God's judgment on themselves in the form of still heavier sorrows than they have yet experienced. W. H. G.—Herein Elihu sets forth more fully an idea which is essential to the complete treatment of the subject—the idea of suffering as a means of purification. By this means Elihu begins to soften the heart of Job, so much wounded by the cruelty of his friends ; he thus prepares the way for that complete submission which is to be consummated by the appearance of Jehovah. He was the forerunner of Jehovah. *Godet.*

8-10. If life often appears to present a different picture and men are seen in affliction, this affliction is a discipline needful to warn them and bring their evil before them. The expression "fetters" (v. 8) is rather to be taken figuratively, meaning affliction or adversity, as "cords of affliction" in the next clause suggests. The meaning of afflictions—they are a Divine warning and stimulus to rouse men out of a sinful lethargy and bring their sin to their remembrance. A. B. D.—The words which

describe afflictions which befall the righteous are purposely chosen to indicate their direct object—viz., to arrest and chastise them when they are going wrong. Fetters and bonds are to be understood figuratively, though the literal sense is defensible. *Cook.*

Afflictions are God's voice showing to men their sinfulness, and warning them, by a salutary discipline, of their evil way and the dangers to which it exposes them. And while His providence is engaged in chastising, His spirit is acting in their hearts, opening their ears to *instruction*, and persuading the hitherto disobedient to *return from iniquity*. The thoughts here expressed approach very nearly to the lessons of Christian submission to God's dealings with His children given in the New Testament. *Curry.*—Though afflictions are evils in themselves, yet they are good for us, because they discover to us our disease and tend to our cure. We are not sufficiently sensible how great an evil sin is till we feel the effects and consequences of it. And, therefore, to rectify our apprehensions concerning it, God makes us to suffer by it. Thus Elihu describes the happy effects of affliction in these verses. God doth but invite and entreat us by His mercies, but His judgments have a more powerful and "commanding" voice. When He "holds man in cords of affliction, then He openeth their ear to instruction." In prosperity we are many times incapable of counsel, but when we are under God's correcting hand, then we are fit to be spoken with. *Archbishop Tillotson.*

11. If the affliction do its work and accomplish that for which it is sent, He will comfort them again according to the time that He has afflicted them; *if they hearken and serve Him*, if they comply with His design and serve His purpose in these dispensations, if when the affliction is removed they continue in the same good mind that they were in when they were under the smart of it, if they perform the vows they made and live in obedience to God's commands, then they shall spend their days in prosperity again and their years in true pleasures. Piety is the only sure way to prosperity and pleasure; this is a certain truth, yet few will believe it. *H.*

Pleasures. The original word expresses a finer and more inward sense of enjoyment; but "pleasures" is frequently used in our Version for the deepest and highest happiness. "Prosperity" is also too outward a word. The original has "in good," which includes all sources of pure enjoyment. *Cook.*

12. God would have instructed them by

their afflictions, but they received not instruction, would not take the hints that were given them; and, therefore, *they shall die without knowledge*, notwithstanding the means of knowledge which they were blessed with. They that *die without knowledge* die without grace, and are undone forever. *H.*

15. The verse goes back to the great general principle of the use of affliction in God's hand (v. 8), in order to connect with it the case of Job, and to found an exhortation to him upon it (v. 16). The word *in* affliction, *in* oppression, might mean *through* affliction, etc.

16-25. Application to Job of the principles in regard to affliction just enunciated by Elihu. *A. B. D.*

16. The design of Job's afflictions being for his good, they are spoken of as means by which God in His mercy sought to lead (allure) him *away from distress*—a condition that was full of peril by reason of his self-righteousness. Out of such a perilous state God desired to bring him *into a broad place*, a condition of safety, where also the Divine blessing might be showered upon him freely. The figure of an abundantly supplied table is in harmony with the facts and sentiments of patriarchal life. The idea stripped of all poetic imagery seems to be, that because God saw that Job was in some danger of coming short of the single-minded devotion that is alone acceptable to Him He had subjected him to chastisement in order to his correction, which, as the event shows, was thoroughly effectual, and Job's later prosperity is the fulfilment of all that is suggested in the last line of this verse.

17. Instead of accepting God's instructions, given in the form of chastisements, with a submissive and docile spirit, Job had looked upon them in a spirit of rebellious anger, because he was, in respect to them, "full of the judgment of the wicked." He refused to see in them the hand of a just and merciful Father. *Curry.*

18. Elihu's doctrine is that afflictions are not the expression of God's wrath but of His disciplinary mercy; and his great object is to warn Job against putting this false construction on God's dealing with him. In the second clause he warns Job against being led astray by the greatness of the *ransom*, by which he means Job's severe afflictions; he admonishes Job not to allow himself to be drawn from the right way by the greatness of the ransom required of him as the price of his restoration to happiness—namely, humble submission to the Divine chastisements, as though this ransom were exceeding great.

19. No other ransom will avail—not riches nor all the power of wealth. Only the purification of suffering will cleanse him from his evil (34 : 36) and deliver him. Elihu demands with emphasis whether all his riches will be accepted as a ransom? It need not be said that the question is put merely for the purpose of heightening the effect of the idea in v. 18, that suffering is the only ransom possible. A similar thought is expressed in Psalm 49 : 7. A. B. D.

20. It was the repose of the grave for which Job longed—for that “night” of death whose successive generations sink down to the world beneath them. *Conant.*—Such was Job’s conception of the night of death. But Elihu here reminds him that the night of death would be at the same time the night of Divine judgment, and that so terrible is that judgment that it can sweep off whole peoples on the spot; how much less, then, could he, single-handed and alone, hope to face it without perishing! Let him rather repent. *Evans.*

21. Again, Job is reminded of the one way of escape still open to him—that of genuine repentance; and the faithful admonition is repeated that in the past he has chosen to abide in impenitence, instead of accepting God’s chastisements in the spirit of true obedience. *Curry.*

22. None is so fit to direct our actions as He; none teaches with such authority and convincing evidence, with such condescension and compassion, nor with such power and efficacy as God does. He teaches by the Bible, and that is the best book; teaches by His Son, and He is the best Master. H.

23. God is a Teacher without a rival; it therefore becomes men to heed His lessons and obey His instructions. It is the key-note of Elihu’s song that God’s ineffable glory is the sure pledge of the righteousness of His dispensations. He chooses His own way as a sovereign, and by what He does He teaches what is right. It is not for man to test the rectitude of what God does or may do in the exercise of His power, but to learn with unanswering docility by what God does what is righteousness and

judgment, for in these his throne abides. *Curry.*

24. Look which way we will, we see the productions of God’s wisdom and power; we see that done and that doing concerning which we cannot but say, This is *the work of God*; the finger of God; it is the Lord’s doing. Every man may see afar off the heaven and all its lights, the earth and all its fruits, to be the work of Omnipotence; much more when we behold them nigh at hand. The eternal power and Godhead of the Creator are *clearly seen and understood* by the *things that are made*. The beauty and excellency of the work of God, and the agreement of all the parts of it, are what we must remember to magnify and highly extol; not only justify it as right and good, but magnify it as wise and glorious, and such as no creature could contrive or produce. Man may see His works, and is capable of discerning His hand in them (which the beasts are not), and therefore ought to praise them and give Him the glory of them. H.

The Creator did not bestow so much exquisite workmanship and skill upon His creatures to be looked upon with a careless, incurious eye, especially to have them slighted or contemned; but to be admired by the rational part of the world, to magnify His own power, wisdom, and goodness throughout all the world and the ages thereof. The more we search and discover of His works, the greater and more glorious we find them to be—the more worthy of and the more expressly to proclaim their great Creator. To make such researches, then, is to answer the ends for which God hath bestowed so much art, power, and wisdom about His works, as well as given us senses to view and survey them, and an understanding and curiosity to search into them; it is to follow and trace Him where and whither He leads us, that we may see and admire His handiwork ourselves and set it forth to others, that they may see, admire, and praise it also. Such is the recommendation of Elihu: “Remember that thou magnify His work.” *Anon.*

CHAPTERS XXXVI., 26-33; XXXVII.

36 : 26 BEHOLD, God is great, and we know him not ;

The number of his years is unsearchable.

27 For he draweth up the drops of water,
Which distil in rain from his vapour :

28 Which the skies pour down
And drop upon man abundantly.

29 Yea, can any understand the spreadings of
the clouds,

The thunderings of his pavilion ?

30 Behold, he spreadeth his light around him ;
And he covereth the bottom of the sea.

31 For by these he judgeth the peoples ;
He giveth meat in abundance.

32 He covereth his hands with the lightning ;
And giveth it a charge that it strike the
mark.

33 The noise thereof telleth concerning him,
The cattle also concerning *the storm* that
cometh up.

37 : 1 Yea, at this my heart trembleth,
And is moved out of its place.

2 Hear, oh, hear the noise of his voice,
And the sound that goeth out of his mouth.

3 He sendeth it forth under the whole heaven,
And his lightning unto the ends of the earth.

4 After it a voice roareth ;
He thundereth with the voice of his
majesty :

And he stayeth them not when his voice is
heard.

5 God thundereth marvellously with his
voice ;
Great things doeth he, which we cannot
comprehend.

6 For he saith to the snow, Fall thou on the
earth ;

Likewise to the shower of rain,
And to the showers of his mighty rain.

7 He sealeth up the hand of every man ;
That all men whom he hath made may know
it.

8 Then the beasts go into coverts,
And remain in their dens.

9 Out of the chamber *of the south* cometh the
storm :

And cold out of the north.

10 By the breath of God ice is given :

And the breadth of the waters is straitened.

11 Yea, he ladeth the thick cloud with moist-
ure ;

He spreadeth abroad the cloud of his light-
ning :

12 And it is turned round about by his guid-
ance,

That they may do whatsoever he command-
eth them

Upon the face of the habitable world :

13 Whether it be for correction, or for his land,
Or for mercy, that he cause it to come.

14 Hearken unto this, O Job :

Stand still, and consider the wondrous works
of God.

15 Dost thou know how God layeth *his charge*
upon them,

And causeth the lightning of his cloud to
shine ?

16 Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds,
The wondrous works of him which is perfect
in knowledge ?

17 How thy garments are warm,
When the earth is still by reason of the south
wind ?

18 Canst thou with him spread out the sky,
Which is strong as a molten mirror ?

19 Teach us what we shall say unto him ;
For we cannot order *our speech* by reason of
darkness.

20 Shall it be told him that I would speak ?
Or should a man wish that he were swal-
lowed up ?

21 And now men see not the light which is
bright in the skies :

But the wind passeth, and cleareth them.

22 Out of the north cometh golden splendour :
God hath upon him terrible majesty.

23 *Touching* the Almighty, we cannot find him
out ; he is excellent in power :

And in judgment and plenteous justice he
will not afflict.

24 Men do therefore fear him :

He regardeth not any that are wise of heart.

Chaps. 36 : 26-33 ; 37. The entire pas-
sage has two sections. First, to the end of
37 : 13, the incomprehensible greatness of God,
seen in the phenomena of the atmosphere ; in
the formation of the rain drops ; in the thunder-

storm ; in snow and ice, which seals up the hand
of man and makes him powerless before the
mighty power of God ; in His lading the cloud
with moisture and guiding it to the fulfilment
of His varied behests upon the whole earth.

Second (37 : 14-24), Elihu exhorts Job to consider these marvels of Him which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, and to let them duly impress him ; bidding him behold the wonderful balancing of the summer cloud in the heavens, when the earth is still with the south wind (vs. 14-17), and the burnished sky is stretched out like a molten mirror (v. 18). With what words shall man come before the Omnipotent to contend with Him ! Man, who is dazzled by the light of the sky, how should he behold the terrible glory around God ! Therefore all men do fear Him ; and He hath not respect to those that are wise in their own understanding (v. 19-24). A. B. D.

26. God is great. Great in power, for He is omnipotent and independent ; great in wealth, for He is self-sufficient and all-sufficient ; great in Himself, great in all His works ; great, and therefore greatly to be praised ; great, and therefore we know Him not ; we know *that* He is, but not *what* He is ; we know what He is not, but not what He is. We know in part, but not in perfection. This comes in here as a reason why we must not arraign His proceedings nor find fault with what He does, because it is speaking evil of the things that we understand not and answering a matter before we hear it. We know not the duration of His existence, for it is infinite ; the number of His years cannot possibly be searched out, for He is eternal, there is no number of them ; He is a being without beginning, succession, or period, who ever was and ever will be, and ever the same, the great *I AM*. This is a good reason why we should not prescribe to Him or quarrel with Him, because as He is such are His operations, quite out of our reach. H.

Elihu affirms that God is great, and therefore He must also be just. He shows that Job's allegation that he has been unrighteously handled, and his impeachment of God's righteousness, are contraventions of His nature as manifested in creation. The omnipotence and wisdom of God, which are everywhere apparent in the universe, furnish a testimony to God's righteousness. All attributes of the Divine nature are rays proceeding from one centre ; where one is, there also of necessity must the others be. How can the being who everywhere shows Himself in creation to be most perfect be defective at this one point ? Every witness, therefore, in *nature* to God's greatness as a *Creator* rises against an arraignment of God's *righteousness*. Whoso will bring a charge against God's justice must measure himself with the Divine omnipotence. *Wordsworth*.

27, 28. Rain always presents itself first to an Oriental mind as the greatest source of all blessings. The words are graphic and carefully chosen. *Cook*.—Elihu, to affect Job with God's sublimity and sovereignty, had directed him (35 : 5) to look unto the clouds ; in these verses he shows us what we may observe in the clouds we see which will lead us to consider the glorious perfections of their Creator. The clouds are as springs to this lower world ; the source and treasure of its moisture, and the great bank through which it circulates a necessary provision, the stagnation of which would be as hurtful to this lower world as of the blood to the body of man. H.

Consider the vast amount of water which is stored up in the atmosphere. The average quantity of aqueous vapor, or water held in the air, is estimated to be 54,460,000,000,000 tons. The annual amount of rainfall is estimated to be 186,240 cubic miles. If this rain were at any one moment equally spread over the land portion of the globe, it would cover all the continents—Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America—with water three feet deep. Of course this water did not originate in the sky ; some time or other it must have ascended. Reflect now that water in its natural state, *i.e.*, water as water, is 773 times heavier than air. Water as vapor occupies 1600 times larger space than water as liquid. Hence water in its vapor state is vastly lighter than air, and naturally ascends. That is the whole secret. By the simple, noiseless, generally invisible process of evaporation, this stupendous weight is raised to and kept suspended at this tremendous height. You know that the countless rivers of earth are evermore, day and night, pouring their vast volumes into the seas. Did you ever think why the seas do not overflow ? *E.g.*, the narrow River Jordan alone annually discharges into the Dead Sea, say, a billion tons of water, and the Dead Sea has no apparent outlet ; and yet it does not overflow. And why ? Because as much water soars from it as flows into it. Did you ever think why the vast, inconceivable quantity of water suspended in the air does not fall on you in smiting, annihilating avalanches ? It is simply because the mists and clouds are but stupendous aerial reservoirs of water, oftentimes thousands of feet in thickness and tens of thousands of acres in breadth. The august system which supplies this vast earth with water is but a gigantic system of water-works, occupying very many thousands of miles in space, having its countless pumps of evaporation and reservoirs of clouds. G. D. B.

Design in water. In studying the evidence of design in water, consider that its specific gravity has been so adjusted that our ships float, and the oceans are made great highways for the nations; that it is easily converted into vapor, and as easily condensed to fertilizing rain and refreshing dew, which nourish the growing plants, fill the springs, and keep the rivers, the great arteries of the globe, in circulation; that at a comparatively low temperature it is changed into highly elastic steam, which, imprisoned by man in his iron boilers, has become the great civilizer of the world; that it has been so exceptionally constituted that the great mass cannot be cooled below forty degrees, and again has been made such a poor conductor of heat that, when the surface is frozen, the very ice becomes a protection against the cold; that to this same liquid there has been given a very great capacity for heat, and that thus it has been made the means of tempering materially the climates of the globe. Add to this that water has been made an almost universal solvent; that from the substances it holds in solution the crustacea form their shells and the coral polypi build their reefs; that it fills the cavities of the rocks with gems and their fissures with useful ores. Besides this host of wonderful mechanical adaptations, remember that water has been made a chemical agent of great energy and power; that there have been united in it the apparently incompatible qualities of blandness and great chemical force; that although in the laboratory of nature it corrodes the most resisting rocks, it also circulates through the leaflets of the rose and the still more delicate human lungs; that it forms the greater part of all organized beings, from the lichen to the oak, and from the polyp to man. Reflect, now, that these are only a few of the grosser qualities and functions of this remarkable compound, gleaned here and there from many others no less wonderful, and you will form still but a very imperfect conception of the amount of design which has been crowded into it. Attempt to find a liquid which, if in sufficient quantity, might supply its place, and you will be still further impressed by this evidence of intelligence and of thought. Of all the materials of our globe, water bears most conspicuously the stamp of the Great Designer, and as in the Book of Nature it teaches the most impressive lesson of His wisdom and power, so in the Book of Grace it has been made a token of God's eternal covenant with man, and still reflects His never-fading promise from the painted bow. *Cooke.*

30. Spreadeth His light around

Him. Think how *silent* and gentle, though mighty, is the action of the light. Morning by morning God's great mercy of sunrise steals upon a darkened world in still, slow, self-impartation; and the light which has a force that has carried it across gulfs of space that the imagination staggers in trying to conceive, yet falls so gently that it does not move the petals of the sleeping flowers, nor hurt the lids of an infant's eyes, nor displace a grain of dust. Its force is gigantic, but, like its author, its gentleness makes its dependents great. So should we live and work, clothing all our power in tenderness, doing our work in quietness, disturbing nothing but the darkness, and with silent increase of beneficent power filling and flooding the dark earth with healing beams. *A. M.*

31, 32. He makes use of the clouds for quite contrary ends; both to punish mankind by lightning, tempests, and floods, and to make a plentiful provision for them by fruitful showers. *Bishop Patrick.*

37:1. At this my heart trembleth. There is no break or pause in the thought between chaps. 36 and 37; the division is strictly arbitrary. The idea of the thunderstorm is dominant, with its awe-inspiring power, expressed by the figure of the melting of the heart, and its removal *out of its place*. It is a well-known fact that the boldest as well as the most timid are awed by the darkness, the glare of the lightning, and the loud peals of the thunder at the coming on of these storms. Even the irrational animals partake of the same feeling. *Curry.*

2-5. The passage contains a most vivid description of a rising storm, apparently one which was then coming on, preparing the minds of all present for the manifestation of the Godhead in the whirlwind. *Cook.*—The description is equally graphic and true to nature. (See Psalm 77:16-19.) These descriptions of meteorological phenomena in this marvellous poem have attracted the attention and commanded the admiration of both literary and scientific writers, notably Humboldt, who, referring to this very chapter, remarks: "The meteorological processes which take place in the atmosphere, the formation and solution of vapor, according to the changing direction of the wind, the play of its colors, the generation of the hail, and the rolling of thunder, are described with individualizing accuracy, and many questions are propounded which we, in the present state of our physical knowledge, may, indeed, be able to express under more scientific definitions, but scarcely to answer satisfactorily."

6-8. The snowfall, the small rain of the beginnings of the rainy season, and the mighty rain that comes on when the seasons are at their height, are all sketched in one verse. The next verse (7) tells of its immediate effects upon men—the hand of every man is sealed up—shut up from ordinary labor—while the world is given over to a force before which men are powerless ; and v. 8 tells of the effects produced upon the beasts, which hide away in their dens, some species to sleep away the season of storms in complete inaction. *Curry.*

6. To the snow, Fall thou on the earth. The smallest snowflakes are formed with the exactest skill and wisdom by the same hand that weighed out the mountains, poured forth the seas, hung the firmament with its radiant spheres, rolled every globe upon its own axis, and flung them whirling through unfathomed space. Creative power Divine, and a skill that mocks imagination's utmost stretch, are here displayed in infinite minuteness. Truly, not the loud thunder of the cataract, nor the roar of ocean, nor the rush of mightiest avalanches, nor the heights sublime of vast majestic mountains, can more overwhelmingly impress the soul with a sense of the incomprehensible, unwearied, ever-active Omnipresence of the Mind of God ! An atheist is baffled by a snowflake, by a raindrop, by a shooting ray of light ; and so, too, is the man who can deny the Omnipresent and particular providence of God. G. B. C.

7. He sealeth up. Brings all human labors to a standstill, so that men may meditate upon His work, or that men who are His work may have a season for reflection. Elihu here reverts to his fixed thought, whatever God does has man's *instruction* for its object. *Cook.*—*He seals up the hand of every man.* In frost and snow husbandmen cannot follow their business, nor some tradesmen, nor travellers when the weather is extreme ; the plough is laid by, the shipping laid up, nothing is to be done, nothing to be got, that men, being taken off from their own work, may know His work, and contemplate that and give Him the glory of that ; and, by the consideration of that work of His in the weather which seals up their hands, be led to celebrate His other great and marvellous works. H.

9, 10. These verses are a description of stormy, cold, and frosty weather ; winds, cold, and freezing are still among “the great things which God doeth, and which we cannot comprehend.” *Scott.*

10. Snowflakes and crystals of frost present under the microscope, and sometimes to the

naked eye, wheels within wheels, orbs concentric and eccentric, radii, sectors, lunes, and polygons, with figures and angles of every kind which the highest magnifying power only exhibits in a still higher perfection. What is yet more wonderful, all these beautiful forms come by a very rapid process from the chaotic vapor of the clouds, or from formless drops so strangely transformed into other and far different *appearances*. This change is here declared to be wrought by the Spirit or *breath of God*. Crystallization is a beautiful term, but it furnishes no explanation of the phenomena themselves. Science knows no more of the hidden power at work among these particles of vapor than of what is going on in the mysterious nebula of Orion. It is from the same *breath*, too, come apparently the most opposite results—“*hailstones and coals, or flames of fire*” (Psalm 18 : 12). *T. Lewis.*

11-13. These verses express still more fully and graphically the Divine agency in the lower heavens, in the formation of the clouds and distribution of the rain over the earth, sometimes to scourge, sometimes to bless the land and to display God's mercy ; and in all these things He challenges our confidence and obedience. *Curry.*

12. *And it is turned round about by His guidance.* The irregular motions of the clouds proceed not from any power of their own, but from His superior direction ; they, like all other created things, may be said to receive their commission from their Maker. *Chappelow.*

13. Rain sometimes turns into a judgment ; it is a scourge to a sinful land ; as once it was for the destruction of the whole world, so it is now often for the correction or discipline of some parts of it, by hindering seeding and harvest, raising the waters, and damaging harvests and dwellings. At other times it is a blessing ; it is for *His land* that that may be made fruitful. See what a necessary dependence we have upon God, when the very same thing, according to the proportion in which it is given, may be either a great judgment or a great mercy, and without God we cannot have either a shower or a fair gleam. H.

14-20. Harken unto this, O Job. Elihu makes his final appeal to Job, again reminding him of God's great power and wisdom and of man's helplessness and ignorance before Him. If Job is able to plead his cause before God, as he had desired, he is challenged to declare what men shall say to God, or how they might order their speech were they permitted to plead before Him. Job is reminded of his weak-

ness by the contrast between God's power over His works—the lightning and the clouds—and his own feebleness, as shown in the fact that he must be protected by his garments, and yet find these to be a burden when the hot south wind of the desert blows upon him. A glance at the face of the sky, spread out like a mirror, which God made and upholds, and to which man cannot reach, should teach him humility and uncomplaining submission. *Curry.*

14. Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. Through all the works of nature God has displayed such manifold and amazing instances of perfect art and consummate skill; has placed before our eyes such a variety of glorious scenes, and framed everything in such order and beauty, harmony and proportion, that it may seem strange men should ever need to be called on to consider them. To consider and admire the wondrous works of God and to behold His government of the universe will doubtless be a principal branch of future felicity. Good reason therefore there is why we should now begin to accustom ourselves to this blessed study. *Balgny.*

16. We know not how the clouds are poised in the air, the *balancing* of them, which is one of the wondrous works of God. They are so balanced, so spread, that they never rob us of the benefit of the sun; even the cloudy day is day; so balanced that they do not fall at once or burst into cataracts or waterspouts; the rainbow is an intimation of God's favor in balancing the clouds so as to keep them from drowning the world. Nay, so are they balanced that they impartially distribute their showers on the earth, so that, one time or other, every place has its share. H. —After all that science can tell us of the clouds, and how they are balanced in the air, there yet remains the deep and glorious mystery about them in which all things are embosomed. And after all our scientific knowledge is gained, that man sees the clouds most truly who sees them as the tokens of God, of His power and presence in the world. *W. R. Brooks.*

17. He describes an Arabian noonday in the height of summer, when the sun is in his full strength, and not a breath of wind stirring to cool the sultry air. The word "wind" is not in the original. "The south" means the south quarter of the heavens, when the sun is in the meridian. The excessive heat and bright transparency of the air in a summer's noon, especially in the warmer climates, perplex philosophy with many difficult questions.

19-24. These concluding verses are the peroration; wherein he represents to Job the rashness and danger of disputing with God; sets forth the incomprehensibility of the schemes of providence; insists that they are planned and executed with most perfect equity and justice; and exhorts him and all mankind to annihilate themselves before their Maker, in profoundest reverence of His adorable majesty. *Scott.*

21, 22. The meaning of this passage is: As, when the light of the sun is hidden from the sight of man by a cloud, the sun is nevertheless shining in the atmosphere, and presently again unveils itself to the eye, so God, though His interposition is often concealed from us, is surrounded by pure light; and as the dark north bears gold in its bosom, so also is there pure light behind the obscurity of God's dispensations. Thus Elihu shows that man is not obliged to resign himself to such conclusions as Job had done, but may, from perceiving that there is a purpose in the Divine dealings, at least attain to so much knowledge that instead of arrogantly censuring providence, he may confidently look for a solution of its enigmas. O.

21. The text represents man's life under the figure of a cloudy day. The sun is in the heavens, and there is always a bright light on the other side of the clouds; but only a dull, pale beam pierces through. Still, as the wind comes at length to the natural day of clouds, clearing them all away, and pouring in, from the whole firmament, a glorious and joyful light, so will a grand clearing come to the cloudy and dark day of life, and a full effulgence of light, from the throne of God, will irradiate all the objects of knowledge and experience. While we live under a cloud, yet there is abundance of light on the other side of the cloud and above it. All our experience in life goes to show that the better understanding we have of God's dealings, the more satisfactory they appear. Things which seemed dark or inexplicable, or even impossible for God to suffer without wrong in Himself, are really bright with goodness in the end. What, then, shall we conclude but that on the other side of the cloud there is always a bright and glorious light, however dark it is underneath. Further, the cloud we are under will break away and be cleared. Precisely what is to be the manner and measure of our knowledge, in that fuller and more glorious revelation of the future, is not clear to us now, for that is one of the dark things, or mysteries, of our present state. But that there will be a great and sudden clearing of God's way, as we enter that world, and a real dispersion of

all the clouds that darken us here, is doubtless to be expected ; for when our sin is completely taken away (as we know it then will be) all our guilty blindness will go with it, and that of itself will prepare a glorious unveiling of God and a vision of His beauty as it is. H. B.

The truth, here expressed in figure, touching the mixed experiences but happy issue of the believer's life, is repeated in another form by Paul. "For now," says the apostle, affirming it first plainly and then under another figure, "for now we know in part, but then we shall know as we are known ; now we see through a glass darkly"—that is, through a partially obscured medium, "but then face to face." So Elihu intimates, under a simple, appropriate image : The day of life is overclouded, but, though men see it not, the light is above and shineth dimly through the clouds ; at the end the clouds shall all be cleared away, at eventime of the believer's day it shall be light. God's dealings with the believer are made up of blended light and shade. But at the end the darkness shall be dispelled, and all shall be light. There is an obvious necessity, wisdom, and kindness in blending shade with light, adversity with prosperity, trial with enjoyment, which many fail to observe and apprehend. An English queen once commanded her portrait to be taken without a shade upon the canvas. With an ignorance as great and infinitely more serious many would have life without its shadings of sorrow and sickness, of suffering and bereavement. They would have life without its moral discipline, without its needful, wise, kind effects of trial. Blessed be God that He knoweth and doeth better than they ; that He understands and carries out the law of spiritual portraiture by setting in the shade to bring forth a truthful life to the light. B.

22. *A golden sheen ; literally, gold.* From the context there cannot be a doubt that by this word Elihu means an appearance of a peculiar kind in the heavens, and approaching them from the north. It is something which seems to combine the *beautiful* with the *terrible*. That there was something of this fearful fascination about it is evident from the sudden cry, "With God is dreadful majesty !" rendered by Renan, "*O admirable splendeur de Dieu !*" Nothing but some wonderful glory before his eyes, something that filled him at the same time with wonder and alarm, could have called out such an exclamation. Some such strange appearance (as Ezekiel's vision, 1 : 4), represented in the distance mainly by its golden color, appears to Elihu as coming from the same direction (the

north). Ezekiel calls it "the likeness of the glory of God," and falls upon his face ; Elihu cries out, "O awful glory of Eloah !" and this is followed by one of those doxologies which appear to have been common to the ancient as well as to the later Arabians—*Allah akbor*, God is very great (vs. 23, 24), incomprehensible, vast in strength and righteousness, He will not oppress. *T. Lewis.*

23. This sublime sentiment is the sum of his whole speech in justification of God. The incomprehensibility and infinite perfection of God silence all objections to His government. This is a sufficient answer even to those two perplexing difficulties in the measures of providence which Job had started ; the destruction of the righteous with the wicked in general calamities, and the prosperity of so many profligate men to the very end of their lives. *Scott.*—An admirable summary of the whole scope and bearing of Elihu's speech ; all God's attributes harmonize with each other, and find their perfect manifestation in love. **He will not afflict.** He will not afflict greatly, or willingly ; affliction is not an end but a means. *Cook.*

Elihu rejects the hard law of retribution. God's purpose in chastisement he declares to be the purification of His servants. If He puts those whom He loves into the crucible, it is to purge away their dross, to cleanse them from past sins, and to keep them from falling in the future. Here, certainly, is a step in advance. We are standing on a loftier platform. We are breathing a purer atmosphere. To see a purpose of love in the affliction is to turn it into a blessing. Even if the conscience does not acknowledge it as merited, to be able to say, "It is a Father's hand that chastens, and He is wiser than I"—this is surely to rob chastisement of its sting. And you will observe that Job accepts in silence this interpretation of his suffering. Evidently it has wrought in him that submission which prepared him for the words of Jehovah, when He answers him out of the whirlwind, and for the humble confession that follows. *Perowne.*

24. Elihu closes with the practical inference : Therefore men—namely, of the right sort, of sound heart, uncorrupted and unaffected, "fear him." He does not regard the wise in heart—that is, those who imagine themselves such, and are proud of their "understanding." *Delitzsch.*—**Fear Him.** This great instruction is the point of aim throughout Elihu's speech ; this is the sublime moral of the whole poem. To establish this primary duty of all religion by His own authority, the Deity Himself at last ap-

pears ; the design of whose speech to Job is to reduce him to this reverent submission, and by his example to enforce it upon all others. *Scott.*

Elihu, in fact, supplies just what Job had repeatedly called for, a confutation of his opinions, not effected by an overwhelming display of Divine power, but by rational and human argument ; such a confutation as would not, like the arguments of the other opponents, rest upon false, bigoted, or hypocritical assertions, but would befit a truthful and candid reasoner. The reasonings of Elihu, moreover, are really needed for the full development of the subject-matter of the book. *Cook.*

Elihu is himself such a "messenger" as he describes (33 : 23, 24), "an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness." He had been selected from all others and sent of God to expound to Job the Divine will and purpose in this mysterious dispensation, and to make known to him his duty in the case. And this was with the result that he had foreshown. "Then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit ; I have found a ransom." Elihu acts the part of a Divinely commissioned and effectual instructor, a teacher who is the instru-

ment of salvation to his suffering and needy friend. He fulfils in a lower sense the very function of the great teacher and prophet of the Lord, in response to whose prevalent vindication the same reply is given, "Deliver him from going down to the pit ; I have found a ransom." Only the ransom is then no longer limited to the figurative sense in which Elihu uses it of the sufferer's own improved spiritual state as an adequate ground or reason for his release from further endurance. The great Teacher has provided a ransom in the strict and proper sense for the release of His people, now and forever, from the bondage that oppresses them.

Elihu's task, of removing misapprehensions from Job's mind and correcting his mistakes, is now fulfilled. But it was not given him to accomplish for Job the full and blessed effects of his temptation. This work the LORD reserved for Himself, to be performed by Him in His own Person. Elihu is but His messenger sent before His face to prepare His way before Him. And now even while he is speaking the rumbling is heard of distant thunder ; heavy masses of cloud begin to darken the sky, and the advancing tempest betokens the Lord's approach. W. H. G.

CHAPTER XXXVIII., 1-38.

1 THEN the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said
2 Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge ?
3 Gird up now thy loins like a man ;
For I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.
5 Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest ?
Or who stretched the line upon it ?
6 Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened ?
Or who laid the corner stone thereof ;
7 When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy ?
8 Or *who* shut up the sea with doors,
When it brake forth, *as if* it had issued out of the womb ;

9 When I made the cloud the garment thereof,
And thick darkness a swaddlingband for it,
10 And marked out for it my bound,
And set bars and doors,
11 And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ;
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed ?
12 Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days began,
And caused the dayspring to know its place ;
13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth,
And the wicked be shaken out of it ?
14 It is changed as clay under the seal ;
And *all things* stand forth as a garment ;
15 And from the wicked their light is withholden,
And the high arm is broken.
16 Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea ?
Or hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep ?

- 17 Have the gates of death been revealed unto thee ?
Or hast thou seen the gates of the shadow of death ?
- 18 Hast thou comprehended the earth in its breadth ?
Declare, if thou knowest it all.
- 19 Where is the way to the dwelling of light,
And as for darkness, where is the place thereof ;
- 20 That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof,
And that thou shouldest discern the paths to the house thereof ?
- 21 *Doubtless*, thou knowest, for thou wast then born,
And the number of thy days is great !
- 22 Hast thou entered the treasures of the snow,
Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,
- 23 Which I have reserved against the time of trouble,
Against the day of battle and war ?
- 24 By what way is the light parted,
Or the east wind scattered upon the earth ?
- 25 Who hath cleft a channel for the water-flood,
Or a way for the lightning of the thunder ;
- 26 To cause it to rain on a land where no man is ;
On the wilderness, wherein there is no man ;
- 27 To satisfy the waste and desolate *ground* ;
And to cause the tender grass to spring forth ?
- 28 Hath the rain a father ?
Or who hath begotten the drops of dew ?
- 29 Out of whose womb came the ice ?
And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it ?
- 30 The waters hide themselves *and become* like stone,
And the face of the deep is frozen.
- 31 Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades,
Or loose the bands of Orion ?
- 32 Canst thou lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season ?
Or canst thou guide the Bear with her train ?
- 33 Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens ?
Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth ?
- 34 Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds,
That abundance of waters may cover thee ?
- 35 Canst thou send forth lightnings, that they may go,
And say unto thee, Here we are ?
- 36 Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts ?
Or who hath given understanding to the mind ?
- 37 Who can number the clouds by wisdom ?
Or who can pour out the bottles of heaven,
- 38 When the dust runneth into a mass,
And the clods cleave fast together ?

THE thirty-eighth chapter of Job may almost be called a poetical parallel to the prose of the Mosaic account. The first of Genesis is evidently in view, and some marks of its order may be traced. God is represented as speaking out of the thunder cloud, and challenging Job's ignorance in a series of questions clothed in the highest garb of poetry—such poetry as we find nowhere else in all the remains of classical antiquity. *T. Lewis*.—The Almighty's speech, in this and the following chapters, is by much the finest part of the noblest and most ancient poem in the world. Longinus has a chapter on interrogations, which shows that they contribute much to the sublime. This speech of the Almighty is made up of them. Interrogation seems indeed the proper style of Majesty incensed. It differs from other manner of reproof, as bidding a person execute himself does from a common execution ; for he that asks the guilty a proper question makes him, in effect, pass sentence on himself. *Dr. Young*.

The design of this appearance of the Almighty is not to vindicate the injured character of Job. Neither is the design of this speech to decide the controversy in the dialogues about the ways of

providence, for the decision of that dispute was reserved for the subsequent *history*. The scope of the speech is to humble Job ; and to teach others, by his example, to acquiesce implicitly in the disposals of God, from an unbounded confidence in His wisdom, equity, and goodness. *Scott*.—Job had been instructed and strengthened by the intensity of the struggle which had been forced upon him. He was now in a state of readiness to welcome a new Divine communication ; and this had been brought about by the trials through which he had passed. Satan meant to have sundered him from the Lord ; he, in fact, opened the way for larger and fuller impartations of Divine knowledge and grace. He had but prepared the way of the Lord, who was now to come to Job with a nearness and fulness of manifestation as never before. *W. H. G.*

The discourse expatiates on the mighty works of God, the vastness and variety of creation. At first sight it appears a not very direct or suitable answer to difficulties about providence ; but it was really the very best teaching for Job, because it expanded his thought beyond the limits of his own trouble, impressed him with a vivid

sense of the Divine wisdom and majesty, and thus rebuked his disposition to complain and remonstrate, as if God were a man like himself. D. F.—When the Almighty at length speaks, in answer to Job's repeated challenge, it is not to argue, it is not to answer, but to unfold the glory and wonder of creation in a series of living pictures, "to point, with mighty but tender irony, to the arch of the rainbow and the fountains of the dawn, and to amaze, to startle, to humble the dust and ashes of mortality with the miracles of His power; to convince them that man is nothing-perfect, and that God is All-complete." But it is not only to convict man of his inability to comprehend the movements of the Divine mind that Job is catechised on his knowledge of the laws of nature, on the diffusion of light, the formation of rain, or the marvels of the treasure-house of ice and snow. It is not merely to convince him of the nothingness of his puny strength that, after he has "girt his loins like a man," he is confronted one by one with inferior creatures which yet defy his dominion and laugh at his pretension and pride, so that the "lord of creation" is left "encircled with a universal chorus of contempt." He is to learn that "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor our ways as His ways;" but at the same time he is to learn that in the outward manifestation of Himself in nature there is enough to confirm the testimony of conscience to a moral order, founded on perfect justice and directed by perfect wisdom. *Aglen.* And what is the Divine revelation? Just the unending miracle that passes before our eyes every day. In the heavens above, in the earth beneath, in the great events of creation and phenomena of nature, in the myriad life that fills land and air and ocean, we are made to see that there is Wisdom and Power sufficient for everything, to make every creature fulfil its part in one infinite purpose and will. No esoteric disclosure for some exceptionally favored disciple, but what every one may lift up his eyes and see. No apologies for mysterious dealings, nor little systems of men corrected, but the perpetual self-justifying course of a harmonious universe. Is it not sublimer so? Would we desire the God of the ages to measure reasoning with mortals, and argue out a case? J. F. G.—The intellectual solution of problems can never be the question between Jehovah and His servants; the question is the state of their hearts toward Himself. He asks of Job, "Who am I?" and "What art thou?" In a series of splendid pictures from inanimate creation and the world of animal life He makes all the glory

of His being to pass before Job. A. B. D.—The whole address is but the unfolding of the thought, I am the infinite and all-perfect God. And this truth is set before his mind by a series of appeals to the grandeur of God's works, by which His perfections are so strikingly displayed in contrast with the utter insignificance of man. Job is made to feel at once who it is that is speaking to him; and how completely he had stepped out of his province, and of what incredible arrogance and presumption he had been guilty in venturing to pass his judgment upon the doings of the Most High. W. H. G.

Jehovah appears; twice He overwhelms Job with the majesty of His words. In the first discourse He treats of this question: Thou who pretendest to be able to judge My ways, canst thou understand this universe? The second turns upon this: Wilt thou try to govern the world in My place, and to do so better than I? This is the development of the second of the two subjects treated by Elihu, but with a more magnificent richness of language, and a more triumphant power. *Godet.*—The Lord's answer to Job out of the storm contains two questions: First (38 : 1 ; 40 : 5), Shall mortal man contend with God? Second (40 : 6 ; 42 : 6), Shall man charge God with wrong in His rule of the world? The two questions, however, are hardly kept apart, for the first implies the second, inasmuch as a man's contention with God will naturally be because of His unjust treatment of himself.

The object of the Lord's answer is twofold, to rebuke Job, and to heal him—to bring home to his heart the blameworthiness of his words and demeanor toward God, and to lift him up out of his perplexities into peace. The two things hardly differ; at least both are effected by the same means—namely, by God's causing all His glory to pass before Job. . . . The trial has been successfully borne; for though Job has sinned under it, his sin has not been of the kind predicted by the Adversary; he has continued to cleave to God, and even sounded deeps of faith profounder than ever he had reached before (ch. 19), and tasted the sweets of righteousness with a keener delight than during his former godly life (17 : 9). At the point at which we are now arrived the sole object of interest is Job's mind in its relations to God. Though the trial has been successfully borne upon the whole, Job has not come out of it scathless. His demeanor toward God, especially in presuming to contend with Him, has been at many points profoundly blameworthy. It might be supposed at first that the simplest way of restoring

Job to peace would have been to reveal to him that his afflictions were not due to his sin, but were the trial of his righteousness, and in this way solve the problem that perplexed him. But the elements of blameworthiness in Job's conduct forbade this simple treatment. The disease had spread in his mind, and developed moral symptoms which required a broader remedy. Besides, it is God who now speaks to Job; and in His teaching of men He never moves in the region of the mere understanding, but always in that of the religious life. He may remove perplexities regarding His providence and ways from men's minds, but He does not do so by the immediate communication of intellectual light, but by flushing all the channels of thought and life with a deeper sense of Himself. This is the meaning of God's manifestation to Job out of the storm. He brings Himself and His full glory near to Job, and fills his mind with such a sense of Him as he had never had before—"Now mine eye seeth thee" (42 : 5). At this sight of God Job is humbled and lays his hand upon his mouth in silence; such thoughts of God as he had never had before fill his heart; his former knowledge of Him was like that learned from hearsay, dim and imperfect, now he saw Him eye to eye, and he repents his former words and demeanor in dust and ashes. A. B. D.

The mind of Job had been prepared for the Theophany, or manifestation, first by the careful review of his past life and of the principles which lay at the foundation of his religious creed; and then by the discourses of Elihu, in which the loving purposes of Divine interpositions were for the first time distinctly enunciated. All that he now needs is a personal revelation, to be brought face to face with Him whom in the midst of his great misery he had ventured to arraign. The Lord God does not, strictly speaking, reason with His creatures; but He does more, He reproves Job, and brings before his mind a vast and most comprehensive picture of His providential administration of the universe. The discourse contains the deepest and highest view which the mind of a patriarch, under Divine teaching, could conceive of the mysteries of existence. Job learned thoroughly the lesson, which in his better nature he had all along adopted as the living principle of his faith, that although the special object which God may have in any one of His works may be wholly undiscoverable, if not incomprehensible to man, yet that they each and all display a manifold wisdom, an all-pervading and all-controlling Providence, an adaptation of means

to ends, which are inseparably connected with absolute goodness, and should teach man to submit, without a question, without struggles or reluctance, to whatever He, the Almighty Maker and King, may ordain or permit.

Chaps. 38, 39. The first discourse is arranged in seven sections, each complete in itself. First, the creation of the earth, sea and light (38 : 1-15). The mysteries of creation, the depths of ocean and of sheol, the sources of light and darkness, of snow, hail, lightning, storm, of rain, dew, ice, and frost (vs. 16-30); the government of the stars, of heaven and earth, of lightning and eloud, and the wisdom thereto required (vs. 31-38); the sustenance of animals, the lion and raven (vs. 38-41). Their generation, the gazelle and hind (39 : 1-4). The comparison of wild and tame animals, the wild ass, the oryx (vs. 5-12); the peculiar characteristics of the ostrich, the war-horse, the hawk, and the eagle (vs. 13-30). *Cook.*

The awful and overpowering phenomena of nature and of life were revealed to Job. He is carried back to the regions of earth and sea and light, and with each question comes, as it were, a lightning flash of poetic beauty. We hear the angelic host, the morning stars, the stars of dawn, fitly hailing the dawn of life in a new-born world, "*when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;*" or the wild and capricious sea subjected to law and order—"Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;" or we see the sudden sunrise in a land of briefest twilight flash on the dark earth, and its scenery coming out sharp and clear as the shapeless clay receives the impress of a seal. The sunshine even there hath a glorious birth. Where wast thou, said the Voice, when these things had their birth? and then his brain is made dizzy by challenges to penetrate now the homes of light and darkness; now the regions of stored and accumulated snows; now the clouds feeding here the streams that, swift or slow, mould the mountains and shape the earth; now falling on the broad desert steppes in beneficent and fertilizing rain; now the realms of ice, the frozen seas; now the majestic heavens and the laws that move the stars. "Where is thy hand? what is thy knowledge among these things?" he is asked. And then he—and Job is here the type of all our race, though the language used to him is couched, of course, in a form suited to his day and generation—is bidden to look upon the forms of wild, untamed, untamable life that filled, in those early days, so vast a portion of the earth's surface. He is

called to look upon those kingly lions that needed not the aid of man ; on the wild ravens whose cry to the poet's ear went up as a very prayer to the Father of all life ; and the rock goats and the wild ass, creatures so strong, so vigorous, so rude, so free, rejoicing in a noble liberty, scorning, he is told, the multitudes of the city, neither regarding the cry of the driver ; then on the mighty and primeval buffalo, unfortunately rendered by the meaningless heraldic unicorn, whom none can train to draw the plough, none force to carry home the garnered wheat ; then the sullen ostrich, so dull to natural feeling, so hardened against her young ones, yet able to put to scorn the steed and its rider. Then the words, "*Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?*" usher in the stirring, the splendid description of the horse, not, as with the Greek poet, the servant of man, but in the form known to Hebrew or Arab or Egyptian, as the fiery, neighing, snorting war-horse of the Arabians, "*who saith among the trumpets, Ha! Ha! who smelleth the battle afar off.*" And the list of pictures which began with the king of beasts ends with that of the queen of birds, who builds her nest upon the rock. The language, we all feel, reaches the very high-water mark of poetic beauty. Nothing in the world can exceed its dignity, its force, its majesty, or the freshness of its pictures of nature and of life. *Dean Bradley.*

38:1. The Lord answered Job.

Granting the human elements of the story, in all their human and *natural* grandeur, the supernatural seems but its fitting complement. It is true that to those who are eye-witnesses of the event the miracle is the attestation of the doctrine ; but for minds that read or contemplate it the converse holds : *it is the glory of the truth that makes the miracle easy of belief.* *T. Lewis.*

Out of the whirlwind. Rather, out of the storm. Jehovah, even when condescending to speak with men, must veil Himself in the storm cloud in which He descends and approaches the earth. Even when He is nearest us, clouds and darkness are round about Him. His revelation of Himself to Job, at least, was partly to rebuke him, for he had sinned against His majesty, and He veils Himself in terrors. A. B. D.

3. Gird up now thy loins. Job had expressed strong confidence in respect to the righteousness of his cause, and great bravery of soul in declaring his readiness to meet God in judgment, and now God meets him and

challenges him to bring all his boasted manhood to the hearing. *Curry.*

4-38. A survey of the inanimate creation, the wonders of earth and sky—the earth (vs. 4-18 ; the heavens (vs. 18-38). A. B. D.

4-11. Earth and sea.

4. Where wast thou? The sentiment conveyed in these striking interrogations is that He alone who made the world is capable of judging how it ought to be governed. This and the three following verses speak of the creation of the earth ; and in terms of architecture which denote exact proportion, nice arrangement, and durable solidity. *Scott.*

Laid the foundations of the earth.

There was a time when this planet did not exist ; a time when our sun was not lighted, nor any world of our system launched. There was a time when no star twinkled in the abyss of space, and no seraph winged his flaming path through the vast empyrean. There was a time when sound was sleeping and light was still unborn. But even then this silent, orbless immensity was full of a latent joy, for it was full of God. Shrouded in their own light inaccessible, filled with mutual delight and complacency, and exchanging communion high and sweet, the Father, Son, and Spirit rejoiced together, and the bosom of Godhead was an ocean of bright, unfathomed blessedness. And so from eternity to eternity the Creator might have continued the silent hiding-place of His own power, the radiant retreat of His own sanctity, the glorious abyss of His own joyful all-sufficiency. Even then God was love. And that love welled so deep and rose so high that at last it overflowed. Creation is the brimming over of the Creator's love, the emanations of that exuberant goodness which must needs relieve its excess of joy by making blessed beings to see and share it. *Hamilton.*

6, 7. The creation of the earth is likened to the rearing of a great edifice, whose extent was determined by line, whose pillars were sunk in their bases, and its corner-stone laid with shoutings and songs of rejoicing among the heavenly hosts. The stars and the angels are here, as usual, conjoined, and the morning stars are named as the brightest and most glorious, as also because the earth rose into existence at the morning dawn. A. B. D.

Here the imagination is directed to the building of a temple ; and then there is brought in that other poetical imagery, than which nothing can be conceived more glorious or more animating, although drawn from one of the customs of the earth : "When the stars of the morning

sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." The metaphor itself is derived from the songs and processions which in all ages have been used at the commencement, or laying the corner-stone of great public buildings. As in Zech. 4 : 7 : "They shall bring forth the corner-stone with shoutings, Grace, grace, unto it;" or, Ezra 3 : 10, where it is said : "They laid the foundations of the temple of the Lord, and the priests stood with their trumpets, and the sons of Asaph with their loud sounding cymbals, and all the people sang aloud in great triumph, and the voice was heard afar." And so the Hosts of Heaven tone jubilee when earth's corner-stone was laid, the beginning of this new temple in which there are to be such rich displays of the Divine glory. *T. Lewis.*

7. Those luminous worlds which adorn the vault of heaven are called *morning stars*, because to the sacred poet it appeared morning when God founded the earth. The songs of praise with which they greeted the morn of creation were that silent yet eloquent language with which, according to Psalms 19 : 1, they still declare the glory of their Creator. Equally clear is it that the expression, "sons of God," refers to the angels who surround the throne of God to execute His behests (Job 1 : 6 ; Psalms 29 : 1 ; 89 : 6 ; 103 : 21). They are called angels in virtue of their office as messengers ; sons of God in virtue of their nature. These titles point to their superiority over weak and sinful man as being the holy inhabitants of heaven, the messengers of Omnipotence, and the reflection of Divine Majesty. . . . Let it be borne in mind that angels are always called the sons of *God*, but not of *Jehovah*. The term *Elohim* designates the Divine Being as the fullness and source of life, of power, of blessedness, of holiness, of glory, and majesty. The term *Jehovah* describes Him as merciful and gracious, as the Saviour and Redeemer who humbled Himself in order to deliver fallen man from His ruin and to draw him upward. The sons of *Elohim* are, therefore, those in whom shines forth, and who are the media of His power and glory. The sons of *Jehovah* are those who receive and are the vehicles of His redeeming mercy. In this sense Israel is called the first-born son of *Jehovah* (Ex. 4 : 22). *Kurtz.*

"Sons of God." Sons they are, as all other intelligent creatures are, by creation. This is the first and obvious manner of sonship ; but they are sons of God emphatically, as being dutiful, obedient, affectionate sons ; sons who know their relation to their Father and act according to it ; sons who in act and spirit, in desire and love,

exhibit the lines and features of the character of their Father ; who imitate because they love Him, and love Him the more as, by imitating, they obtain a deeper and more intimate knowledge of Him. They are the elder brothers of God's family ; elder in creation, elder in obedience, elder in present privilege—elder sons who are ever with Him and yet feel no jealousy, but rather loyal joy in heaven when any of the younger outcast prodigals of the same blood returns. We hear of no self-originated schemes, whether of mercy or wisdom, among them. They are servants of God who do His pleasure ; excellent indeed in strength and far surpassing us in knowledge and power, but yet loyally keeping within the bounds of their appointed service, not venturing to press into secret knowledge, however much they desire to look into it, finding their sufficient joy and fullness of nature in filling up the measure of their prescribed duty. *Stoughton.*

The angels rejoiced at the laying of the foundation-stone of the earth, the natural temple of God's glory. And the angels sang hymns of joy at the laying of the foundation-stone of the temple of the new creation in the nativity of Christ. And there will be a universal hallelujah of angels and saints at the building of the New Jerusalem of the glorified in heaven. *Wordsworth.*—The Scriptures mention three occasions in which the angelic orders evinced sympathetic joy. The first was on the creation of man and his world. "Then the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." The second, when the Son of God became man. "A multitude of the heavenly host was with the angel praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." The third is the occasion mentioned by Jesus : "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." From collating these three occasions we would be led, naturally enough, to the inference that there is some high, mysterious importance attached by the universe of purely spiritual beings to the calling into existence of this new and peculiar order of being, the compound creature man ; a creature not after the angelic order of a separate, individual, immaterial existence, but capable, through the connection of his spirit with matter, of communicating the power of an endless life to a whole race of beings propagated from him. Hence possibly the concern at the failure of the experiment in his trial ; and therefore the joy and praising God at the near completion of the scheme for his restoration ; hence the special joy at every

instance of the success of that scheme in the repentance and return of the sinner. S. R.

8-11. This refers to Gen. 1 : 9. It is a magnificent realization of the mighty rush of the waters when the mountains were upheaved. The words "gathered together" in Genesis expresses a rapid, simultaneous motion. The ocean is here personified as a new-born giant, shut in, confined, wrapt and swaddled in the first outburst of its might. *Cook.*—The figures in these verses are very splendid. First, the ocean is represented as an infant giant, breaking forth from the womb. Then the infant ocean was swathed in clouds, and thick clouds were its swaddling bands. Finally, the new-born monster must be tamed by almighty power, and an impassable bound set to its proud fury. A. B. D.

11. And said, Hitherto shalt thou come. There is a character of great magnificence in all that precedes ; but this is signally sublime. We are struck with admiration to see the vast and ungovernable ocean receiving commands and punctually obeying them ; to find it, like a managed horse, raging, tossing, and foaming but by the rule and direction of its Master. *Dr. Young.*—The sea is God's, for He made it, He restrains it ; He says to it, *Here shall thy proud waves be stayed.* This may be considered as an act of God's power over the sea ; though it is so vast a body, and though its motion is sometimes extremely violent, yet God has it under check ; its waves rise no higher, its tides roll no further than God permits ; and it is mentioned as a reason why we should stand in awe of God (Jer. 5 : 22), and yet why we should encourage ourselves in Him ; for He that stops the noise of the sea, even the noise of her waves, can, when He pleases, still the tumult of the people (Psalm 65 : 7). It is also to be looked upon as an act of God's mercy to the world of mankind, and an instance of His patience toward that provoking race ; though He could easily cover the earth again with the waters of the sea. H.

The Lord has hitherto appointed limits in the natural world ; and in the time to come that world will not deviate from His rule, according to which temporary disturbances are ever becoming of less significance. He has hitherto set limits to every outbreak of human passions ; to all the complications that have arisen from men's conflicting dispositions and wishes, up to the present time ; He has thrown over the kingdom of grace, the defence that He promised to Him whom He set on His right hand ; and He will do so still in the future. Through all the

sufferings of the Christian Church, she has fought her way to a blessed liberation from the bondage of human authority, and to a clearer light of truth. And so it will be with all the troubles that may be before us in the future. God the Lord will set bounds and limits to them with the same result as before, and not without an equal blessing ; and we may indulge the special hope that the Church of God, although passing through many forms of strife and division, will, as the salt of the earth, be ever attaining a closer likeness to the perfection of Him in whom, as the express image of God, there can be nothing discordant, but all is holy unity and blessed peace. *Schleiermacher.*

13. Ends of the earth. Literally, *skirts* or *wings* of the earth. The figure is beautiful ; the dawn as it pours forth along the whole horizon, on both sides of the beholder, lays hold of the borders of the earth, over which night lay like a covering ; and seizing this covering by its extremities it shakes the wicked out of it. The wicked flee from the light. The dawn is not a physical phenomenon merely, it is a moral agent. A. B. D.

12-15. These very remarkable figures occur only in this passage. They represent vividly two effects of light, the one moral—evil-doers are discomfited by it ; the other physical—earth assumes new form and beauty. The earth is represented as a vast expanse, the light seizes at one rush its extremities, and causes, so to speak, a concussion or shock by which the children of darkness are panic-struck, and, as it were, shaken off its surface. In chap. 24 Job represented the evildoers as working with impunity in darkness ; here he is told that the light, which they hate and dread, has a direct mission to overthrow them. *Cook.*

14. It is changed as clay under the seal. As plastic clay receives and retains the figures of the seal, so the earth, under the sun's illumination, seems to receive new forms of life and beauty. The righteous rejoice in the light, but the wicked slink away at its coming. *Curry.*—The objects of the earth stand forth, when the morning sun has lighted them up, like a beautiful garment embroidered with bright tissue and variegated colors. *Wordsworth.*—During the darkness of the night the earth is a perfect blank, in which state it resembles clay that has no impression. By the morning light falling upon the earth, innumerable objects make their appearance upon it ; it is then changed, like clay which has received the stamp of the seal. Such appears to be the meaning of this elegant simile. Sealing upon

clay is still practised in the East. When the corn-granary at Grand Cairo belonging to the Sultan is full, the inspectors, says Norden, having shut the door, put on their seal upon a handful of clay, which they make use of instead of wax. *Scott.*

15. And from the wicked their light is withholden. By a bold figure the wicked are here said to be deprived of their light when the morning has dispelled the darkness; for darkness is light to them, whose "high arm" is said to be "broken," because in the morning they lose their boldness and hide themselves through fear, but in the night they are daring and resolute. *Rosenmüller.*

16-19. The impossibility of knowing the origin, end, object, or course of creation is shown by reference to the depths of ocean, to the unseen world, to the extent of earth, and to the alternations of light and darkness. Modern science continually extends the sphere of our knowledge, but leaves those limits untouched; in fact, the wider the sphere of our vision the vaster the regions of the unknown brought home to our consciousness. *Cook.*

17. The gates of death. Isaiah calls them "the gates of sheol"—that is, the entrance into the region of the dead, the world of departed souls. The general receptacle of departed spirits was called in Hebrew *Sheol*, and in Greek *Hades*; and is defined by Job, "*The house of assembly for all living*" (30 : 23). *Scott.*—*The gates of the shadow of death!* Rightly considered, there is surely something exceedingly awful in this expression. Death here, Shadow or Skeleton, is the King of Terrors, because we know him not till we get beyond, within those unseen portals whence this vast, wide, creeping, desolating shadow issues and enshrouds us. Death! Its shadow covers the world, darkens it, and fills all hearts with gloomy fears and forebodings. All their lifetime, through fear of death, men are subject unto bondage. Its shadow is here, but its substance and its power are the power of an endless life, life in death, and death in life, conflicting forever. The reality of death is in eternity. And that death is called in Scripture the second death. This is that of which the first death is but the shadow. Salvation from that is, indeed, salvation. *Cheever.*

19. Where is the way where light dwelleth? This question differs from that in vs. 12-15. *That* related to the morning and its benefit to mankind; *this* to settling the precise boundary of light and darkness—that is, day and night. One half of the earth is enlightened, the other half is in darkness at the

same instant. Job is now asked whether he was witness to that operation of creation by which the limits of light and darkness were fixed, and knew the extent both of one and the other. The question is put in figurative language. Light and Darkness are represented as persons; each has its separate dwelling-place and peculiar jurisdiction; the bounds of one never encroach on those of the other. *Scott.*—**20, 21.** Job is asked if he knows the way to the dwelling-place of light and darkness, so that he might take them back to the place of their abode. The words "thou knowest" refer to the question (v. 19), Which is the way? Job knows the way to the place of light (v. 21), for he was born contemporary with it; he is as old as the day-spring which morning by morning has overspread the earth since creation's dawn. *A. B. D.*

Science has taken many a step of progress; she has explored phenomenon after phenomenon, but has she really arrived at those ultimate truths to which all these questions point? Is she really any nearer to them than in the days of Job; or, is she not still on the outside in respect to the ineffable facts, or first workings of nature, that this sublime challenge has pre-eminently in view? Does she truly "know where light dwelleth"? Can she even explain one of its most common phenomena? The sciolist may talk of science having "rendered obsolete the language of the Bible," but it required the far deeper science and deeper philosophy of a Humboldt to observe, "that, though in the present state of our physical knowledge, many of these questions propounded to Job may be expressed under more scientific definitions, yet it can scarcely be said that we can answer them more satisfactorily." *T. Lewis.*—The Bible frequently refers to natural facts as illustrations of spiritual truths, asserting thereby an analogy between the natural and spiritual worlds. Where it does this, the accuracy of its references is remarkable—unexampled in so far as I know in any other literature. We find, both in the shorter references to nature, and in such larger and more elaborate compositions as the concluding chapters of Job, a treatment of nature worthy of a revelation from God, and whose minute accuracy is constantly being confirmed by the researches of scientific travellers. *Dawson.*

22. Treasures of the snow. The best treasures of nature are the truths it teaches concerning God and ourselves. In the production of the snow is disclosed the power and skill of the Great Creator. In a moment He changes

the vapor of the atmosphere into myriads of crystal gems. Every snowflake is as perfectly crystallized as a diamond. Captain Scoresby has delineated ninety-six different forms of crystals, and says: "The extreme beauty and endless variety of objects revealed by the microscope in the animal and vegetable kingdoms are fully equalled, if not surpassed, *in both beauty and variety*, by the crystals of snow;" and there are 27,000 of these crystals in every square inch of the carpet which covers the earth. From the snow, too, we learn that God loves beauty. The earth's winter garment might have been as warm without being as fairy-like and radiant as it is. Its exquisite texture and dazzling whiteness repeat, in winter, the lesson of the summer flowers. And in the snow we read the goodness of our God. "He giveth snow like wool," says the Psalmist. Yes, it is the wool of the clouds, cast lovingly over the slumbering vegetation to protect it from the fierceness of the winter storm. The farther north we go, the deeper the snow; the feathery blanket is made thicker. *Anon.*

Two things about the snow we do not often think of connecting together. One is silentness, and the other is power. The strongest things in the world are the most silent. The snow is strong and silent. Your lives would be stronger if they were silent. Another thing about snow is that it joins together two things not always together—beauty and usefulness. The snow, which we talk of as cold, is the thing that keeps the life and warmth in the roots in the earth. It keeps out the cold and keeps in the moisture. *T. T. Shore.*—And the snow is God's own symbol of the regenerated heart. "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." *Anon.*

23. Snow and hail are represented as having been created and laid up in great storehouses in the heavens or above them, from whence God draws them forth for the moral ends of His government. The idea may be suggested by observation of the vast masses in which snow falls. Job, no doubt (so it is ironically assumed), has inspected these treasures, or was present when at creation the Almighty filled them! A. B. D.

24. The light, the east wind. The origin of the force by which "the light" diffuses itself through space is among the many things upon which physical science, even in our day, sheds no light. The blowing of "the wind," even when apparently regulated by times and seasons, though known as a fact, is unknown

in respect to its cause; and Christ's words to Nicodemus (John 3 : 8) are as true of the present day as they were of the time when they were first spoken. *Curry.*

25-41. Hitherto, God had put such questions to Job as were proper to convince him of his ignorance and shortsightedness. Now he comes in the same manner to show his impotency and weakness. As it is but little that he knows and, therefore, he ought not to arraign the Divine counsels, so it is but little that he can do and, therefore, he ought not to oppose the proceedings of Providence. Let him consider what great things God does and try whether he can do the like, or whether he thinks himself an equal match for Him. God has thunder, and lightning, and rain, and frost, at command, but Job has not, and therefore let him not dare to compare with God or to contest with Him. H.

26, 27. To cause it to rain. As God by His power sends His "rain" upon the earth, so also, in His sovereign wisdom, He causes it to fall where it may please Him, and not as man's wisdom might determine. God's care, even in the earth, is not confined to man. *The wilderness* where *is no man*, and *the desolate* places are all cared for by Him, and by considering these things Job might learn humility and submission. *Curry.*—Man is not, as he might think, the only object of God's regard. God is great and His providence very wide. His goodness is over all His works. He satisfies with rain the thirsty wilderness where no man is, that the tender grass may be refreshed. A. B. D.

28-30. These questions refer not to the analysis of phenomena or of natural laws, but to the inner principles of which science *now* professes to know nothing. *Cook.*—Vs. 25-27 refer to the rain as it falls and to its effect upon the earth; these verses to the more secret action of the vapor as it is condensed into rain and dewdrops and *frozen* into snow and hail, and how the fluid water is solidified into *ice*, making the face of the deep like *stone*. Here, too, the mysteries of nature elude man's wisdom, but God knows and performs it all. *Curry.*—There has been great lack of attention to the momentous fact that so much of this language of *generation* or of *evolution*, or production by birth (one thing coming out of another), is employed in Scripture. (See Psalms 90 : 2; Prov. 8 : 22; Gen. 1 : 2.) It is all so different from those ideas of mechanical or magical creation which distinguish so many pagan (and also the Mohammedan) mythologies. It is a Divine *evolution*, through an outgoing word, and the term should not be given up to

the naturalists, who discard the idea of semination, and thereby make it an eternal, uninterfered-with, self-evolving of the higher as lying hid in the lower—in the lowest even—from an infinite eternity. *T. Lewis.*

28. The formation of the dew is represented in Scripture as the work of God and not of man ; and its descending to refresh and fertilize the earth is mentioned as His peculiar gift, and in opposition to human means of rendering the earth more fruitful. And the prophet Micah declares that “ the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” *R. Dixon.*

31-38. He is now asked whether he has power over the heavenly bodies to direct their motions, control their action upon the earth, and prevent the seasons and weather which they are apt to produce. *Scott.*—From the upper atmosphere—the region of clouds and vapor—the scene is now removed to the firmament, or place of the stars, and this whole section refers to the direction of the regular movements of the heavenly bodies and their influence upon the earth. The term “Pleiades” is commonly understood to indicate the well-known seven stars—a group of seven small stars (only six visible to the naked eye) in the neck of the constellation Taurus. *Curry.*—The word correctly rendered Pleiades denotes a “heap” or “group” (see 9 : 9), and probably was intended merely to describe the appearance of that beautiful constellation, which, as well as Orion, in Syria is far more brilliant, and remains longer above the horizon, being at an altitude seventeen degrees higher than in our climate. *Cook.*

It is a curious fact that the revelations of science have led astronomers of our own day to the discovery that the sun is not the dead centre of motion, around which comets sweep and planets whirl ; but that it, with its splendid retinue of worlds and satellites, is revolving through the realms of space at the rate of millions of miles in a year, and in obedience to some influence situated precisely in the direction of the star Alcyone, one of the Pleiades. We do not know how far off in the immensities of space that centre of revolving cycles and epicycles may be ; nor have our oldest observers or nicest instruments been able to tell us how far off in the skies that beautiful cluster of stars is hung, whose influences man can never bind. In this question alone, and the answer to it, is involved both the recognition and exposition of the whole theory of gravitation. *Maury.*—

It was the impressive conclusion of M. Maedler that this visible universe of suns and their systems is moving around some grand centre in a ceaseless and, to us, mysterious march. Guided by analogy, Herschel reached this inference ; and since that time definite reasoning has confirmed it. M. Maedler’s conclusion that the star, Alcyone, one of the Pleiades, the well-known seven stars, represents the common centre of the cosmical system, has in its support such concurrent approval that it may be accepted. Not only is the language of Job very definite, but its precision is beginning to be recognized as in harmony with scientific discovery. The more we learn of the mechanism of the heavens, the more significant does Job’s inquiry become. For many centuries mystery so shrouded the question, “Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion ?” that men concluded it was meaningless. It is now intelligible. The word rendered Pleiades—*Chimah* in the original—while held by some to represent a “heap” or “group,” is said by others to mean literally a *linge*, that around which other bodies turn or move. The phrase legitimately suggests the idea of a controlling power which connects with this centre the circling march of the universe. *W. Fraser.*

The isolated group of the “Seven Stars,” from the singularity of its appearance, has been distinguished and designated by an appropriate name from the earliest ages. The learned priests of Belus carefully observed its risings and settings nearly two thousand years before the Christian era. By the Greeks it was called Pleiades, from the word *pleein*, to sail, because it indicated the time when the sailor might hope to undertake a voyage with safety ; and also Vergiliæ, from *ver*, the spring, because it ushered in the mild vernal weather favorable to farming and pastoral employments. The Greek poets associated it with that beautiful mythology which in its purest form peopled the air, the woods, and the waters with imaginary beings, and made the sky itself a concave mirror from which came back exaggerated ideal reflections of humanity. The Seven Stars were supposed to be the seven daughters of Atlas, by Pleione—one of the Oceanides—placed in the heavens after death.

But an interest deeper than any derived from mythical association or classical allusion is connected with this group of stars by the use made of it in Scripture. In the apparently simple and passing allusion to it in Job lies hid the germ of one of the greatest of physical truths—a germ lying dormant and concealed in the pages of

Scripture for ages, but now brought into air and sunlight by the discoveries of science. The question recently began to be raised among astronomers, "Does the sun stand still, or does it move round some other object in space, carrying its train of planets and their satellites along with it in its orbit?" Attention being thus specially directed to this subject, it was soon found that the sun had an appreciable motion, which tended in the direction of the constellation of Hercules—a lily-shaped group of small stars underneath the Plough in the northwestern quarter of the heavens. This motion of the sun—while it gave a higher meaning to the grand description contained in the nineteenth Psalm, showing it to be no mere popular language or poetical metaphor, but a strict astronomical truth—also accounted in the most accurate manner for several curious discrepancies in regard to the positions of the stars observed on comparing ancient and modern catalogues, which were formerly inexplicable. Toward the constellation of Hercules the stars seem to be opening out; while at the opposite point of the sky their mutual distances are apparently diminishing—as if they were drifting away from the goal of the sun's course. When this great physical truth was established beyond the possibility of doubt, the next subject of investigation was the point or centre round which the sun performed this marvellous revolution; and after a series of elaborate observations and most ingenious calculations this intricate problem was also satisfactorily solved—one of the greatest triumphs of human genius. M. Maedler, of Dorpat, found that Alcyone, the brightest star of the Pleiades, is the centre of gravity of our vast solar system—the luminous *hinge* in the heavens round which our sun and his attendant planets are moving through space. The very complexity and isolation of the system of the Pleiades, exhibiting seven distinct orbs closely compressed to the naked eye, but nine or ten times that number when seen through a telescope—forming a grand mechanism, whose individuals are united with each other more closely than with the general mass of stars, indicate the amazing attractive energy that must be concentrated in that spot. Vast as is the distance which separates our sun from this central group—a distance thirty-four millions of times greater than the distance between the sun and our earth—yet so tremendous is the force exerted by Alcyone that it draws our system irresistibly around it at the rate of 422,000 miles a day, in an orbit which it will take nineteen millions of years to complete. With this new explanation, how remarkably striking and ap-

propriate does the original word for Pleiades appear! What a lofty significance does the question of the Almighty receive from this interpretation! "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" Canst thou arrest or in any degree modify that attractive influence which it exerts upon our sun and all its planetary worlds, whirling them round its pivot in an orbit of such inconceivable dimensions, and with a velocity so utterly bewildering? In this vast and complex arrangement not one wheel jars or creaks—not a single discordant sound disturbs the deep, solemn quietude of the midnight sky. Smoothly and silently each star performs its sublime revolutions. Although composed of so many bodies—differing in size, form, and consistence—they are all exquisitely poised in space in relation to one another, and to their common centre; their antagonistic forces are so nicely adjusted as to curb every orb in its destined path, and to preserve the safety and harmony of the whole. Moons revolve around planets, comets and planets around the sun, the sun around Alcyone, and Alcyone round some other unknown sun, hid far away in some unexplored depths of our galaxy; and grand beyond conception, this cluster of systems around the great centre of ten thousand centres—the white throne of the Eternal and the Infinite; and all with a rhythm so perfect that we might almost believe in the old poetic fable of "The Music of the Spheres." In this vision of orbits and revolutions, more awful and stupendous than Ezekiel's vision of wheels within wheels, we see seated on the throne above the firmament, not a blind chance or a passionless fate, but one like unto the Son of Man—He whom John saw in Patmos, holding the mystery of the seven stars in His right hand—possessed of infinite love as well as infinite power—binding and loosing the sweet influences of Pleiades solely for the order and good of His creation.

Man's lifetime is a mere moment—nay, the history of our race, with all its great and varied events, is but a handbreadth compared with the duration of the orbit of our system. During the 6000 years of our existence on the earth, we have traversed thousands of millions of miles; and yet all that time we have obtained no new view of the heavens. All things have continued as they were; the same stars and constellations, in nearly the same positions in the sky, gleam down upon us which appeared to the shepherds on the midnight plains of Chaldea in the time of Job. So vast is the orbit of our system that from the creation of man to the present day, we have described but an infinitesimal arc of it.

Our annual progress, though expressed by one hundred and fifty millions of miles, would appear, if viewed from the nearest fixed star, as little more than one third of a second of space. We know not how long our race may exist in this world ; but if it be destined to outlive the completion of this vast course, strange and unimagined glories will be revealed to future generations. The heavens of our time will wax old and disappear ; constellations with which we are now familiar will give place to unknown combinations ; and ever as our system rolls on through space it will pass into new collocations ; new suns and systems will advance, open out their splendors, and fill the sky with their glory, and then recede—so that when time shall be no more, the human race in prospect and retrospect of this vast aerial journey will have a higher conception than is now possible of the boundless domains and the inexhaustible riches of the Infinite God.

Canst thou loose the bands of Orion? This cluster of stars—the *Kesil* of the ancient Chaldeans—is by far the most magnificent constellation in the heavens. The constellation of Orion is composed of four very bright stars, forming an elongated square, with three equidistant stars in a diagonal line in the middle. The two upper stars, called Betelgeux and Bellatrix, form the shoulders ; in the middle, immediately above these, are three small, dim stars, close to each other, forming the cheek or head. These stars are distinctly visible only in a very clear night. The feet are composed of two very bright stars, called Rigel and Saiph ; the three stars in the middle are called the belt or girdle, and from them depends a stripe of smaller stars, forming the hunter's sword. The whole constellation, containing seventeen stars to the naked eye, but exhibiting seventy-eight under an ordinary telescope, occupies a large and conspicuous position in the eastern or southern heavens, below the Pleiades ; and is often visible, owing to the brightness and magnitude of its stars, when all other constellations, with the exception of the Plough, are lost in the mistiness of night. Orion is not only the most striking and splendid constellation in the heavens ; it is also one of the very few clusters that are visible in all parts of the habitable world. The equator passes through the middle of it ; the glittering stars of its belt being strung, like diamonds, on its invisible line. The ubiquity of this constellation may have been one of the reasons why it was chosen to illustrate God's argument with Job, in a book intended to be read universally wherever the human race should extend.

The three bright stars which constitute the girdle or *bands* of Orion never change their form ; they preserve the same relative position to each other, and to the rest of the constellation from year to year, and from age to age. They present precisely the same appearance to us which they did to Job. No sooner does the constellation rise above the horizon, however long may have been the interval since we last beheld it, than these three stars appear in the old familiar position. They afford to us one of the highest types of immutability in the midst of ceaseless changes. And yet in the profound rest of these stars there is a ceaseless motion ; in their apparent stability and everlasting endurance there is constant change. In vast courses, with inconceivable velocities, they are whirling round invisible centres, and ever shifting their positions in space, and ever passing into new collocations. Mysterious triplet of stars, that are ever changing, and yet never seeming to change ! How wonderful must be the Power which preserves such perfect order amid all their complex arrangements, such sublime peace and everlasting permanence amid the incalculable distances to which they wander, and the bewildering velocities with which they move ! What answer can Job give to the question of the Almighty ? Can man whose breath is in his nostrils and who is crushed before the moth, separate these stars from one another, or alter their relative positions in the smallest degree ?

There is one object of surpassing interest connected with the constellation of Orion. On examining the middle star in the sword on a clear frosty night it appears, even to the naked eye, invested with a kind of haze or indefiniteness not usually observed about stars of similar magnitude. The application of the smallest telescope reveals at once the cause, and resolves the seeming star itself into a diffused mist of light. We are gazing on the far-famed nebula of Orion, the most stupendous and magnificent object in the heavens. By that faintly luminous speck we are brought to the very outskirts of creation, to the remotest point which human vision has been able to reach amid the awful profundities of space. Though visible to the naked eye, and connected with one of our nearest constellations, it lies so immeasurably far off, separated from us by an immensity so great, that a ray of light leaving it must take fifty or sixty thousand years to reach our world. For a long time the most powerful instruments of the astronomer anxiously directed to this celestial hieroglyphic under the most favorable conditions for observation, and even in southern climes, where the

skies are incomparably clearer than ours, could not decipher its real character. It provoked a profound curiosity, which it refused to gratify. So unaccountable did it seem—so utterly unlike any other object in the heavens—so different from all that had hitherto been known of collections of stars—that some of the most eminent astronomers did not hesitate to assert that it was merely an accumulation of self-shining nebulous fluid, akin to the cometic, diffused amid the interstellar spaces of our own heavens. This, however, it could not be, for, unlike a comet, it never shifted its relative position among the stars of Orion—it never came one second nearer our earth, and no remoter stars could be seen shining through it. By others, with more plausibility, it was regarded as matter in an extreme state of rarefaction and diffusion. Hence originated the famous “nebular hypothesis.” Here, they imagined, they were conducted to the very source of matter, existing at first in a gaseous diffused condition in space, gradually concentrating and becoming solid, until at last stars and worlds were produced capable of supporting organic life. This, they thought, geological testimony warranted them in supposing was the history of our own earth’s construction; and if so, why might not other bodies of the solar and stellar systems be even now going through a series of similar changes? But no sooner was the magnificent telescope of Lord Rosse directed to it, in circumstances favorable for the employment of its highest powers, than the luminous haze became resolved into myriads of sparkling particles, small as the point of a needle, and close as the grains of a handful of sand. It was found to be, not matter in an extreme state of diffusion and rarefaction, but a vast assemblage—a very blaze of stars—clusters upon clusters—systems upon systems; the molecules double stars; the ultimate particles suns with planets perchance revolving around them. Though to the naked eye apparently only a thousandth part of the visible breadth of our own sun, this faintly luminous patch contains in reality more stars than the telescope can enable us to see all over the heavens in the clearest winter night. And there are thousands of such nebulae, presenting the strangest forms and so distant from each other that light must travel a thousand years before it can pass from one to another. Some of the nebulae lying on the very verge of infinity baffle the curiosity of the astronomer and continue mere films of light even under the most powerful telescope; but analogy leads us to conclude that all nebulae are resolvable into stars, and appear as nebulae only

because of their great distance. - All the countless stars that glitter singly in our heavens belong to one nebula; our solar system is one of its central stars; Arcturus, Orion, the Pleiades, and all the brilliant constellations which we see on a cloudless night, form its spangled interior; while the broad, irregular zone of filmy light which girdles the heavens, called by the American Indians the “Road of Souls,” the path of the good to Paradise, is its dim and distant outskirts. And this magnificent universe spreading immediately around us on every side, would appear, if viewed from the nearest nebula, a mere filmy cloud, hardly distinguishable in the depths of the heavens. Each of the hazes that float in space is a universe by itself, a galaxy of suns and planets; each nebula is a firmament of stars, a heaven of constellations, rising tier above tier—stratum above stratum—vast beyond the utmost stretch of imagination; some so remote that the light by which we see them left them ages before the creation of man—nay, their dim illumination may inform us, “not of their present existence, but that they were, and sent forth into space the light we are now receiving at an epoch farther back into the past than the momentary epoch of our human race by above twenty millions of years.” Who, then, can gaze upon the cloudy speck in the sword of Orion without feelings of the deepest emotion? While it silences the scoff of the infidel, it increases the awe and reverence of the devout by immeasurably exalting their conception of the universe—by giving a new and profound significance to the solemn appeal to man which issued from the invisible shrine of the All-encompasser—the All-sustainer—“Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?” “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?” *Hugh Macmillan.*

A starry night is a most potent auxiliary to Revelation in vivifying our thought of the *somewhere* where God dwells. These glistening worlds are *places*, of which we say “here” and “there.” The universe is resplendent with them. Christian astronomers conjecture, from the disclosures of the telescope, that there is a certain unique globe, the centre of all gravities in celestial space, which holds to the whole sidereal cosmos the same relation that Alcyone—the most radiant of the Pleiades—does to our solar system. They guess that around that centre of all motion, stars, and systems of stars, and firmaments of systems, are revolving in intricate and tributary splendor; and they suggest that *there* is the imperial capital of the uni-

verse. *There* is the one world which has no motion but on its own axis, itself the emblem of eternal and infinite repose. And *there*, as nowhere else, it may be, is concentrated the superlative glory of Jehovah's presence. We must concede, not only that this finds no contradiction in the disclosures of the Bible, but that the reserve of inspiration is here and there broken by hints which encourage such conjectures. "Is there not something at the bottom of our hearts better than science, which invites us to believe that what would be so fitting and beautiful is also triumphantly actual?" *Phelps*.

32. Mazzaroth. It is right to retain this word, which is evidently the name of a constellation, but it is doubtful which constellation is meant. Many critics follow the Targum, which identifies it with the Zodiac; this would imply a change of reading or interchange of letters which, though possible, ought not to be assumed without necessity; and is open to the more serious objection that the Zodiac could scarcely be interposed between Orion and the Bear. The etymology of the word, as Dillmann observes, points to the root *zahar* (Arabic, *zoharah*, glittering star), and a constellation, or star of peculiar brightness, is certainly meant—very probably the planet Jupiter or Venus, shining with peculiar splendor at certain seasons; hence the question, Canst thou *bring out* Mazzaroth at its *season*? Or the Sirius of the Egyptians, whose "coming forth" determines the chronology of the seasons and years. *Cook*.

33. Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? The Bible is at one with science in affirming the constancy of natural law. God has made "a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning." He has enacted the "ordinances of the heavens." The uniformity of nature as under natural law, expressing the will of the unchangeable Creator, is as certain a dogma of Scripture as it is a result of science. If the Creator is perfect, His action must be uniform; anything else would be unworthy of Him. The extremest materialist can claim nothing for natural law which the Bible does not claim for the will that changes not, the power that "fainteth not, neither is weary." Nor can even the pantheist claim any closer indwelling in nature for his mechanical, all-pervading essence than the Bible claims for its personal God. *Darwin*.

34-38. Clouds, lightning, and rain are alike inscrutable as to their causes and effects. *Cook*.—In that, the phenomena—lightning and others—execute the Divine will (vs. 34, 35), they

seem themselves to be endowed with wisdom and understanding no less than living creatures, whence, in fact, the mythology of many other nations regards them as Divine beings. But in the case of the Hebrews there is always a Higher One above them who (vs. 37, 38) directs them with wisdom, and in order that too much rain may never destroy the earth, counts the pitchers of heavens—the clouds—even when the rain is the strongest. *Ewald*. — Thunder-showers were the subject in vs. 25-27. The same subject seems to be resumed here. But there the operation was the guiding of the rainy clouds through the air to the place appointed for the discharge of their contents; here a body of dark clouds is collected to form, as it were, a pavilion for the Lord of thunder. The rain is mentioned there as poured down on the desert for the benefit of wild beasts; here it is sent to mollify the hardened glebe and prepare the field for ploughing and sowing. The lightnings also are here sent forth with greater pomp and Divine majesty. What can be more humiliating than such interrogations as this? What must Job, what must any man, think of himself for daring to enter into a strife with God and to find fault with His ways; when his own ignorance is thus contrasted with His wisdom; his own weakness with His power, and his own littleness with His tremendous majesty?

35. Here we are. This surprising figure of speech, which gives intelligence and a voice to the lightnings, expresses with great sublimity the punctuality with which inanimate creatures observe the laws prescribed to them, and perform the service enjoined them by their Creator. *Scott*.

36. Put wisdom—given understanding. God is the Author and Giver, the Father and Fountain of all wisdom and understanding. The rational soul itself and its capacities come from Him as the God of nature, for He forms the spirit of man within him. True wisdom, with its furniture and improvement, comes from Him as the God of grace and the Father of every good and perfect gift. Shall we pretend to be wiser than God, who have all our wisdom from Him? *H*.

37. The clouds are compared to those earthen jars in which the Eastern people keep their water and their wine, "the bottles," or pitchers "of heaven." The disposing of the clouds in a proper manner for emptying themselves is denoted by the position into which a pitcher or jar is put for pouring out its contents; who can "pour out" the pitchers of heaven?

38. These showers are sent to soften the glebe and prepare it for ploughing when it has been baked and hardened by the long drought of summer. *Scott.*

The main thought which pervades this dis-

course is not so much the inability of man to search out God's ways, as the apparent opposition between the conclusions of his understanding and the purposes which those ways indicate so indistinctly. *Cook.*

CHAPTERS XXXVIII., 39-41; XXXIX.

38 : 39 WILT thou hunt the prey for the lion-
ess ?

Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
40 When they couch in their dens,
And abide in the covert to lie in wait ?
41 Who provideth for the raven his prey,
When his young ones cry unto God,
And wander for lack of meat ?

39 : 1 Knowest thou the time when the wild
goats of the rock bring forth ?

Or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve ?
2 Canst thou number the months that they
fulfil ?
Or knowest thou the time when they bring
forth ?
3 They bow themselves, they bring forth their
young,
They cast out their sorrows.
4 Their young ones are in good liking, they
grow up in the open field ;
They go forth, and return not again.
5 Who hath sent out the wild ass free ?
Or who hath loosed the bands of the wild
ass ?
6 Whose house I have made the wilderness,
And the salt land his dwelling place.
7 He scorneth the tumult of the city,
Neither heareth he the shoutings of the
driver.
8 The range of the mountains is his pasture,
And he searcheth after every green thing.
9 Will the wild-ox be content to serve thee ?
Or will he abide by thy crib ?
10 Canst thou bind the wild ox with his band
in the furrow ?
Or will he harrow the valleys after thee ?
11 Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is
great ?
Or wilt thou leave to him thy labour ?
12 Wilt thou confide in him, that he will bring
home thy seed,
And gather *the corn* of thy threshing floor ?
13 The wings of the ostrich wave proudly ;

But are they the pinions and plumage of
love ?

14 For she leaveth her eggs on the earth,
And warmeth them in the dust,
15 And forgetteth that the foot may crush them,
Or that the wild beast may trample them.
16 She dealeth hardly with her young ones, as
if they were not hers :
Though her labour be in vain, *she is* without
fear ;
17 Because God hath deprived her of wisdom,
Neither hath he imparted to her understand-
ing.
18 What time she lifteth up herself on high,
She scorneth the horse and his rider.
19 Hast thou given the horse *his* might ?
Hast thou clothed his neck with the quiver-
ing mane ?
20 Hast thou made him to leap as a locust ?
The glory of his snorting is terrible.
21 He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his
strength .
He goeth out to meet the armed men.
22 He mocketh at fear, and is not dismayed ;
Neither turneth he back from the sword.
23 The quiver rattleth against him,
The flashing spear and the javelin.
24 He swalloweth the ground with fierceness
and rage ;
Neither believeth he that it is the voice of the
trumpet.
25 As oft as the trumpet *soundeth* he saith,
Aha !
And he smelleth the battle afar off,
The thunder of the captains, and the shout-
ing.
26 Doth the hawk soar by thy wisdom,
And stretch her wings toward the south ?
27 Doth the eagle mount up at thy command,
And make her nest on high ?
28 She dwelleth on the cliff and maketh her
home
Upon the point of the cliff, and the strong
hold.

29 From thence she spieth out the prey ;
Her eyes behold it afar off.

30 Her young ones also suck up blood :
And where the slain are, there is she.

39. This verse should have begun a new chapter, for we here pass to a new topic, the brute animals which inhabit the air, the land, and the water. This subject is continued with a few short interruptions unto the end of the Almighty's speech. Those species of animals are selected in which the wisdom, power, and providential care of the Creator are most eminently displayed. The tendency of the descriptions is to raise in our minds such admiration of the Deity as will effectually extinguish discontent and silence murmurings against His dispensations. *Scott.*

CHAPS. 38 : 39 ; 39 : 30. THE MANIFOLDNESS
OF THE DIVINE MIND AS DISPLAYED IN THE
WORLD OF ANIMAL LIFE.

The instances chosen are the lion and the raven (vs. 39-41) ; the wild goats and the hinds (39 : 1-4) ; the wild ass (vs. 5-8) ; the wild ox (vs. 9-12) ; the ostrich (vs. 13-18) ; the war horse (vs. 19-25) ; the hawk and the eagle (vs. 26-30). These brilliant pictures from the animal world have the same purpose as those given before (vs. 4-38) from inanimate nature ; they make God to pass before the eye of Job. They exhibit the diversity of the animal creation, the strange dissimilarity of instinct and habit in creatures outwardly similar, the singular blending together of contradictory characteristics in the same creature, and the astonishing attributes and powers with which some of them are endowed ; and all combine to illustrate the resources of mind and breadth of thought of Him who formed them and cares for them—the manifold play of an immeasurable Intelligence and Power in the world. A. B. D.

39, 40. The "lioness," having the care of her young upon her, and thrown entirely upon herself, is for that reason especially in need of an adequate provision, and for both herself and her young ones the hand of God makes provision. *Curry.*—The appeal here is to the *instincts* with which God has endowed animals, and to the fact that He had so made them that they would secure their own food. He asks Job whether he would undertake to do what the lion did by instinct in finding his food, and by his power and skill is seizing his prey. There are in the arrangement by which all this is accomplished marks of wisdom which far surpass the skill of man to originate, and the instinct and power by which it is done are proof of the supremacy of the Most High. No one can

study the subject of the instincts of animals, or become in the least acquainted with natural history without finding everywhere traces of the wisdom and goodness of God. *Barnes.*

41. Who provideth for the raven ?

The providence of God, particularly in the supplies afforded to the ravens, is divers times taken notice of in the Scriptures. It is a manifest argument of the Divine care and providence in supplying the world with food and necessities, that the ravens, accounted as unclean, and little regarded by man, destitute of stores, and that live by what falleth here and there ; that such a bird should be provided with sufficient food—especially if that be true which Aristotle, Pliny, and Ælian report, of their want of affection and cruelty to their young ; that they expel them from their nests as soon as they can fly. *Derham.*—The raven is one of the commonest birds in Palestine ; by its incessant croaking it presses itself upon the attention, and is often alluded to in Scripture. The cry of its young is an appeal unto God (Job 1 : 20), and the feeling of it is proof of His universal providence, which does not overlook even the least of His creatures (Psalms 147 : 9 ; Luke 12 : 24). The lion and the raven are here associated perhaps by way of contrast, the one being the most powerful and the other one of the least of God's creatures. Their natures, too, are most dissimilar—the silent, subtle, self-reliance of the one, crouching patiently in his lair, and the clamorous outcry and appeal of the other, wandering over the land in search of food. The raven, of course, is a general name covering the whole crow tribe. A. B. D.

39 : 1. Knowest thou ? Bochart observes with truth, "Here there is no question of idle and merely speculative knowledge, but of that knowledge which belongs to God only, by which He not only knows all things, but *directs and governs them.*" Thus, too, Dillmann, "Observation of nature is a special characteristic of Hebrew poetry and thought." It may be added also that "knowledge" includes here a perception of final causes, of which science says little and knows less. *Cook.*—Two animals uncared for by man, and who are also without the marked cunning that distinguishes some others, and largely unprovided by nature with the means of offence and defence ; and yet because God cares for them they are fed and protected. The periods of their gestation and the processes of parturition are especially

named as things directed by the Divine providence, and as lying equally beyond man's power and wisdom. *Curry*.

The words "knowest thou," "dost thou mark," and the like, though no doubt referring partly to man's ignorance of the habits of these remote and timid creatures, carry also the question, Is it Job who presides over and determines all things connected with the life and habits of these solitary creatures? A. B. D.

—*The wild rock goats* are timid and inoffensive animals, the same as the ibex or mountain goats of the Swiss and Tyrol Alps. They pasture together in small flocks, and are still numerous on the mountains in the peninsula of Sinai and to the east and south of the Dead Sea. They are extremely shy of man, and their senses are so acute that the huntsman finds great difficulty in approaching near enough to fire upon them. *Conant*.

5. The wild ass. The characteristics of this animal—its wildness, its love of the barren deserts, and its dislike to everything pertaining to civilization, and generally its savage independence of man's help—illustrate its dependence on God alone, who gave it its habits and provides for its necessities. It is found all through the wild desert regions of Asia. *Curry*.—This animal forms the transition from the stag and deer genus to the ass; it is single-hoofed and long eared; its hornless head somewhat resembles that of the gazelle, but is much larger; its hair has the dryness of the hair of the deer. It is entirely distinct from the wild ox (*mahâ*, vs. 9-12), whose large, soft eyes are so much celebrated by the poets of the steppe. This latter is horned and double hoofed. Both kinds are remarkable for their very swift running, and it is especially affirmed of the former that no rider can overtake it. *Wetzstein*.

Freedom from service and liberty to range at pleasure are but the privileges of a wild ass. It is a pity that any of the children of men should covet it or value themselves on it. It is better to labor and be good for something than ramble and be good for nothing. The tame ass, that labors and is serviceable to man, has his master's crib to go to both for shelter and food, and lives in a fruitful land; but the wild ass, that will have his liberty must have it in a barren land. He that will not labor let him not eat. He that will shall eat the labor of his hands, and have also to give to him that needs. H.

9. Wild-ox. The Hebrew word simply names an animal, "Rêm," which early translators identified with the legendary unicorn, but which modern commentators take to mean the

oryx, a well-known species of gazelle. The whole passage indicates a beast resembling the ox, such as the oryx, or leucoryx, which chew the cud, have cloven feet, and are bulkier than any of their congeners. Dr. Tristram, whose authority is paramount, says, "Beyond all doubt the Reem is the Urus of Cæsar—i.e., the Auerochs." *Cook*.

10-12. The point of the passage lies not so much in the terrible attributes of the creature himself, as in the contrast between him and the tame ox, which he externally resembled. He was fitted for all the labor performed by the domestic animal, but was wild and untamable. Man uses the one, let him lay his hand upon the other and subdue him to his service! Who is the author of this strange diversity of disposition in creatures so like in outward form? A. B. D.

13-18. The ostrich hollows a place in the sand for her eggs, which she warms with her body at night, but often leaves them by day to be warmed in the sun. It is not said here, as some have objected, that she takes no charge of her eggs or young, but that she is wanting in the vigilance and care shown by other fowls, in the selection of a safe place for a nest, in watching over it and over her young till they can take care of themselves. *Conant*.—The nest of the ostrich is always in the sand, deep and round, with layers of eggs—about thirty. The "leaving" does not mean "forsaking," but simply committing to the sand. The outer layer of eggs is generally so ill-covered that they are destroyed by jackals and wildcats. If she finds that her nest has been disturbed in her absence she will crush the eggs and abandon it altogether. *Cook*.

The extraordinary rapidity of the ostrich has always been celebrated, and it is well known that she can easily oustrip the fleetest horse. Its swiftness is mentioned by Xenophon, in his "Anabasis;" for, speaking of the desert of Arabia, he says that ostriches are frequently seen there; that none could overtake them, and that horsemen who pursued them were obliged soon to give over, "for they escaped far away, making use both of their feet to run, and of their wings, when expanded as a sail, to waft them along." Dr. Shaw says, "Notwithstanding the stupidity of this animal, its Creator hath amply provided for its safety by endowing it with extraordinary swiftness, and a surprising apparatus for escaping from its enemy." *Barnes*.

—Its speed has been calculated at twenty-six miles an hour by Dr. Livingstone, and yet the South African ostrich is smaller than the

northern species; and I have myself, in the Sahara, measured its stride, when bounding at full speed, from twenty to twenty-eight feet. *Tristram.*

19-25. Hast thou given the horse his might? The animal described in vs. 19-25 is specifically the war horse of the East, more definitely that of Arabia—the *locale* of the Book of Job. As the companion scarcely less than the servant of man, both in his pleasures and in war, the horse has been bred and trained to the highest degree of animal perfection, and its excellences have constituted a special theme for poetical eulogy. As all these qualities belong to his nature, and are the gifts of his Creator, Job is called to find in them demonstrations of God's greatness. The description is especially full and graphic—the *quivering mane*, the bounding motion (as a *locust*), the snorting and pawing, the fearlessness before the *sword* and the rattling of the *quiver* and *spear* and *javelin*, his swallowing *the ground*, his fearless response to the *trumpet*, with his own instinctive battle-cry as he *smelleth the battle* from afar, with *the thunder of the captains*, and *the shouting* of the embattled hosts, all these together present a scene of intense energy, and an unusually well-filled-out picture, at once vivid and truthful. The things named in their bold, poetic imagery are also so true to nature as to obviate the need of elaborate expositions of details. *Curry.*

19. Clothed his neck with the quivering mane. The point which struck those who saw for the first time the mighty war horse in battle must have been the terror of the neck with its quivering muscles and tossing mane, and the word here used denotes most probably that impression. Clothed with terror may be the best rendering; it includes the idea of a vehement and terrific movement. *Cook.*

21. The war horse waiting for the signal, and in his angry impatience biting the very ground. There may be hyperbole here, but so natural that the reader is scarcely conscious of it. It is at the beginning, or in an interval of the battle. The trumpets, as is usual in cavalry tactics, are giving the marshalling signals, but the time has not quite come for the signal of the grand charge. The war horse bites the ground in his impatience, and at every sound it is almost impossible to hold him. *T. Lewis.*

26. The instinct here referred to, which leads many of the feathered tribes to seek more con-

genial climates at the approach of winter is one of the clearest proofs of Divine wisdom and agency. *Barnes.*

27-30. High up on a mountain peak the eagle builds its eyrie, and God has given it a remarkably sharp vision, to see far into the depths below the food that is there for it and its young ones. Not only from the valley in the neighborhood of its eyrie, but often from distant plains, which lie deep below on the other side of the mountain range, it seizes its prey and rises with it even to the clouds, and bears it to its nest. Thus does God work exceeding strangely, but wondrously, apparently by contradictions, but in truth most harmoniously and wisely, in the natural world. *Delitzsch.*

Throughout this discourse two points are kept before Job—the infinite wisdom of God, shown in the impartation of instincts infinitely varied and marvellously satisfied, and the impossibility of discovering the regulating or central principle. Man has his own definite position—he is chief and head of creation, but when he attempts to explain God's works by reference to his own wants he is utterly foiled. The inference which Job ought to draw is that he knows nothing save that God is unsearchable, and that man's one duty is unquestioning submission. *Cook.*

The purpose of making these wonders of creation pass before Job's eyes was to display God before him, and to heal the presumption of his heart. Every one of these wonders utters the name of *God* with a louder emphasis in Job's ears. It is not any attribute of God that is dwelt upon, it is God in all the manifoldness of His being that passes before Job's mind. That the Lord speaks at all implies that He says something that may be understood by the creature of His hand. His speaking may be indirect and in parables, but it will contain meaning. It is true that the object of the Divine speeches is to bring Job's heart to submission, and cause him to assume his right place before the Creator. And this was necessary, for Job, as he acknowledges, had sinned against the majesty of God. But the Lord does not command Job to take this place; he induces him. And he does so by the only means that will ever induce any human spirit to put itself right with God—the revelation of Himself. This revelation given to Job was patient, broad, and manifold. A. B. D

CHAPTERS XL., XLI., XLII., 1-6.

- 40 : 1** MOREOVER the LORD answered Job, and said,
 2 Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty ?
 He that argueth with God, let him answer it.
 3 Then Job answered the LORD, and said,
 4 Behold, I am of small account ; what shall I answer thee ?
 I lay mine hand upon my mouth.
 5 Once have I spoken, and I will not answer ;
 Yea twice, but I will proceed no further.
- 6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
 7 Gird up thy loins now like a man :
 I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
 8 Wilt thou even disannul my judgment ?
 Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified ?
 9 Or hast thou an arm like God ?
 And canst thou thunder with a voice like him ?
 10 Deck thyself now with excellency and dignity ;
 And array thyself with honour and majesty.
 11 Pour forth the overflowings of thine anger :
 And look upon every one that is proud, and abase him.
 12 Look on every one that is proud, *and* bring him low ;
 And tread down the wicked where they stand.
 13 Hide them in the dust together ;
 Bind their faces in the hidden *place*.
 14 Then will I also confess of thee
 That thine own right hand can save thee.
 15 Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee ;
 He eateth grass as an ox.
 16 Lo now, his strength is in his loins,
 And his force is in the muscles of his belly.
 17 He moveth his tail like a cedar :
 The sinews of his thighs are knit together.
 18 His bones are *as* tubes of brass ;
 His limbs are like bars of iron.
 19 He is the chief of the ways of God :
 He *only* that made him giveth him his sword.
 20 Surely the mountains bring him forth food ;
 Where all the beasts of the field do play.
 21 He lieth under the lotus trees,
 In the covert of the reed, and the fen.
 22 The lotus trees cover him with their shadow ;
 The willows of the brook compass him about.
- 23 Behold, if a river overflow, he trembleth not :
 He is confident, though Jordan swell even to his mouth.
 24 Shall any take him when he is on the watch,
 Or pierce through his nose with a snare ?
- 41 : 1** Canst thou draw out leviathan with a fish hook ?
 Or press down his tongue with a cord ?
 2 Canst thou put a rope into his nose ?
 Or pierce his jaw through with a hook ?
 3 Will he make many supplications unto thee ?
 Or will he speak soft words unto thee ?
 4 Will he make a covenant with thee,
 That thou shouldest take him for a servant for ever ?
 5 Wilt thou play with him as with a bird ?
 Or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens ?
 6 Shall the bands of *fishermen* make traffic of him ?
 Shall they part him among the merchants ?
 7 Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons,
 Or his head with fish spears ?
 8 Lay thine hand upon him ;
 Remember the battle, and do so no more.
 9 Behold, the hope of him is in vain :
 Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him ?
 10 None is so fierce that he dare stir him up :
 Who then is he that can stand before me ?
 11 Who hath first given unto me, that I should repay him ?
Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.
 12 I will not keep silence concerning his limbs,
 Nor his mighty strength, nor his goodly frame.
 13 Who can strip off his outer garment ?
 Who shall come within his double bridle ?
 14 Who can open the doors of his face ?
 Round about his teeth is terror.
 15 *His* strong scales are *his* pride,
 Shut up together *as with* a close seal.
 16 One is so near to another,
 That no air can come between them.
 17 They are joined one to another ;
 They stick together, that they cannot be sundered.
 18 His neesings flash forth light,
 And his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.
 19 Out of his mouth go burning torches,
 And sparks of fire leap forth.

20 Out of his nostrils a smoke goeth,
As of a seething pot and *burning* rushes.
21 His breath kindleth coals,
And a flame goeth forth from his mouth.
22 In his neck abideth strength,
And terror danceth before him.
23 The flakes of his flesh are joined together :
They are firm upon him ; they cannot be
moved.
24 His heart is as firm as a stone ;
Yea, firm as the nether millstone.
25 When he raiseth himself up, the mighty are
afraid :
By reason of consternation they are beside
themselves.
26 If one lay at him with the sword, it cannot
avail ;
Nor the spear, the dart, nor the pointed shaft.
27 He counteth iron as straw,
And brass as rotten wood.
28 The arrow cannot make him flee :
Slingstones are turned with him into stubble.
29 Clubs are counted as stubble :
He laugheth at the rushing of the javelin.
30 His underparts are *like* sharp potsherds :
He spreadeth *as it were* a threshing wain
upon the mire.

31 He maketh the deep to boil like a pot :
He maketh the sea like ointment.
32 He maketh a path to shine after him ;
One would think the deep to be hoary.
33 Upon earth there is not his like,
That is made without fear.
34 He beholdeth every thing that is high :
He is king over all the sons of pride.

42 : 1 Then Job answered the LORD, and
said,
2 I know that thou canst do all things,
And that no purpose of thine can be re-
strained.
3 Who is this that hideth counsel without
knowledge ?
Therefore have I uttered that which I un-
derstood not,
Things too wonderful for me, which I knew
not.
4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak ;
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto
me.
5 I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ;
But now mine eye seeth thee,
6 Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent
In dust and ashes.

CHAP. 40 : 1-5. EFFECT OF THE FIRST DI-
VINE SPEECH ON JOB.

As if the purpose of the preceding survey of creation might be lost in the brilliancy of the individual parts of it, the Divine Speaker gathers up its general effect and brings it to bear on Job directly, demanding whether he will persevere in his contention with Jehovah—will the reprover contend with the Almighty ? (vs. 1, 2). Job is abased by the glory of God which He has made to pass before him, and brought to silence—I am too mean, what shall I answer thee ? I lay my hand upon my mouth (vs. 3-5). A. B. D.

2. Contend with the Almighty. The great point is thus determined ; any reasoning which implies a right to remonstrate with the Almighty, or to dictate the course which He ought to adopt, is presumption. Job had fully recognized the wisdom and omnipotence of God, but had questioned His righteousness ; he had to learn that God's ways are not man's ways, nor within his competence to judge. *Cook.*

Job has desired to "bring his cause" before God ; this indeed has been his most constant longing, and for this we left him all ready when he ceased speaking. Has he still the same desire, after all this view of the various wisdom

inlaid in nature ? Will he still "contend" (the legal term) as a reprover and critic, after he has seen so much that is beyond and above him ? The following words of Robert Buchanan interpret well the significance of the Lord's question here, as related to the review of creation that has just been given : "Because there is sin and misery in the world, because hearts ache and bodies die, shall we turn upon this sublimely exhaustless Being, and demand explanation ? Is it not something to know how He delights in making, in endless creating, and that One who thus delights cannot be cruel ? The explanation will come."—**Let him answer.** He that is great enough to "censure," to pass judgment on God, is great enough to answer his own questions ; if to him God's way is not self-justifying, no answer from outside himself would justify it. J. F. G.

3-5. The nature of the preceding interrogations, the pungency of their rapid succession, the majesty of the speaker, and the circumstances of terror that accompanied his speaking could not fail of having a powerful effect. Job is now sensible of his own blindness, weakness, and littleness ; of the rashness of his complaints, and the excess of his self-justification. These convictions produced the confession here related.

4. He retracts by this expression the too high value he had set on his own rectitude. "I am of small account" in the immensity of Thy works, and am so now in my own eyes. *Scott.*

5. I have spoken once and again foolishly, but I will not defend what I have unadvisedly said, nor proceed further in such presumptuous expressions and accusations of Thy providence. *Clark.*—Job has come to feel his utter and incomparable inferiority before God, and to realize the highly reprehensible character of the words that he has spoken. He finds that he has nothing to answer. He has spoken at large *once, twice*, but he now sees the impropriety of all that he had said, and wisely resolves to *proceed no further*. His changed tone is commendable, but as yet no expression of penitence is heard. *Curry.*

The first effects are humiliation and submission; but silence and submission are not enough. What is wanted is teachableness and perfect trust, of which this first confession of Job does not give any clear indication; hence the occasion for a second address. *Cook.*

CHAPS. 40 : 6 ; 42 : 6. THE LORD'S SECOND ANSWER TO JOB OUT OF THE STORM. *Shall Man Charge God with unrighteousness in His Rule of the World?*

All that the first speech of the Lord touched upon was the presumption of a mortal man desiring to contend with the Almighty. The display from creation of that which God is had the desired effect on Job's mind; he is abased and will no more contend with the Almighty. But Job had not only presumed to contend with God, he had charged Him with unrighteousness in His rule of the world and in His treatment of himself. This is the point to which the second speech from the storm is directed.

The passage has two parts: First (vs. 6-14), as Job had challenged the rectitude of God's rule of the world, he is ironically invited to clothe himself with the Divine attributes and assume the rule of the world himself. Then follows (40 : 15 ; 41 : 34) a lengthy description of two monsters, behemoth and leviathan. Second (42 : 1-6), Job's reply to the Divine challenge. He confesses that he spoke things which he understood not. He had heard of God by the hearing of the ear, but now his eye saw Him, and he abhorred his former words and demeanor and repented in dust and ashes. A. B. D.

6-8. Job has come to see that he has no wisdom wherewith to enter the lists against the infinite Wisdom of the world and pass judgment

on what is so complex. The Lord now takes him one step farther back and asks him why he should separate God's cause from his own, as if they must be antagonists. Is there not room, in such a universe, for both God's right and Job's? Nay, and such belligerent assertion of a mortal's "rights"—which assertion we will remember Job has not yet withdrawn—is *that* the attitude for utter weakness to assume before infinite Power? Questioning like this, and from such a source, fulfils Elihu's wish as no words of the friends could do; it "tries Job to the utmost," revealing and refining the real gold of his character. J. F. G.

7. **Gird up thy loins now like a man.** The same challenge as before (38 : 2). It answers Job according to his own folly expressed in his desiring to meet God in order to justify himself against the implication of guiltiness in God's treatment of him. *Curry.*

8. By "disannulling God's judgment" is meant "condemning God," as the latter sentence explains it. Job's complaints and manner of justifying himself amounted to charging God with injustice. *Scott.*—This is precisely the issue that Job had made, and continued to reiterate, as was also charged against him by Elihu. To convict the ruler of injustice is to "disannul" his "judgment," since all judgment must abide in righteousness. Job had transgressed in other and less serious matters, but this (so the word "even" plainly implies) is the most presumptuous of all his offences. In justifying himself Job had condemned God. *Curry.*

9-14. He who presumes to argue with God must, like Him, be arrayed with majesty, able, like Him, to reduce all creatures to subjection. The moral law of the Divine government is briefly intimated in vs. 11-13. *Cook.*

10. **Deck thyself now with majesty.** The magnificent scenery in this and the four following verses presents to us the Almighty arrayed in the splendors of Divine majesty, exerting His supreme dominion, and manifesting His righteous vengeance by thundering and lightning on the heads of haughty tyrants and hurling them down to the bottom of Hades. (See Isa. 30 : 30.) Job is ironically required to invest himself with the attributes of Deity, and to assume the glorious ensigns of Divine majesty: that he may execute judgment on proud oppressors and other profligate men, of whose impunity and prosperity he had so loudly complained. *Scott.*—**Array thyself with glory and beauty.** To understand those expressions in Scripture which speak of Jehovah

being arrayed or clothed with majesty, strength, honor, or the like, we must recollect the glorious manner in which He vouchsafed to appear to His people in fire, light, and clouds. *Parkhurst.*

10-14. As Job questions the manner of the Almighty's rule of the world, God invites him to deck himself with the thunder and majesty of the Supreme Ruler, and himself undertake the government of the world ; and in the execution of this government to bring low all that is proud (comp. Isa. 2 : 12, *seq.*), to subdue and keep down the forces of evil, and hide the faces of the wicked in darkness. Under this ironical invitation to Job there lie two general thoughts : *First*, that omnipotence is necessary in the Ruler of all ; and, *second*, that the rule of the world consists in keeping in check the forces of evil. This is the idea under which the rule of the world is conceived ; in other words, it is regarded as necessarily moral ; and it is assumed that God's rule is, in fact, a rule of this kind. In his present frame of mind Job probably would not now contest this. But if God's rule be moral, on the whole, it must be so in every particular ; real exceptions are inconceivable, however like exceptions many things may appear. A. B. D.

14. Then will I also confess of thee. Job's right to sit in judgment on God's administration of affairs must be sustained by the display of the requisite power to govern. This God challenges Job to display, with the promise that, having done so, his claim shall be recognized. *Curry.*—He is for once to put on the robes of the King of kings, and send forth his wrath over pride and evil-doing for their complete removal. Try it only for once—this is the collective thought—to act like Me in the execution of penal justice, I would praise thee. D.—**That thine own right hand can save thee.** That thou art self-sufficient, the author and preserver of thy own happiness ; therefore a god and a match for Me. This humiliating sarcasm makes way for another mortification ; for the Almighty next sends him to two of His creatures, behemoth and leviathan, and bids him prove his high courage in an open encounter with either of them. *Scott.*

In vs. 6-14 Jehovah invited Job to assume the rule of the world, and to bring low all opposing forces of evil. He is able to do this, seeing he challenges the rule of the Almighty. And to bring to his consciousness whether he is able or not, two creatures, the work of God's hand like himself, are brought before him and the question put, Is he able to enter into conflict with

them and subdue them ? Is he, therefore, able to assume the rule of the world or to enter into conflict with the Creator of these formidable monsters ? “ Who then will stand before Me ? ” (41 : 10). A. B. D.

15-24. *Description of Behemoth.*

15. “ Behold now behemoth, and consider whether thou art able to contend with Him who made that beast and gave him all the power he has, and whether it is not thy wisdom rather to submit to Him and make thy peace with Him.” H.—In the Book of Job God has thrown open to us the heart of a man apparently perfect in all things possible to human nature except humility. We are here shown that no suffering, no self-examination, however honest and stern, no searching out of the heart by its own bitterness is enough to convince man of his nothingness before God ; but that the sight of God's creation will do it. For, when the Deity Himself has willed to end the temptation and to accomplish in Job that for which it was sent, He does not vouchsafe to reason with him, still less does He overwhelm him with terror, or confound him by laying open before his eyes the book of his iniquities. He opens before him only the arch of the dayspring and the fountains of the deep ; and amidst the covert of the reeds, and on the heaving waves He bids him watch the kings of the children of pride. “ Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee ! ” And the work is done. *Ruskin.*

Behemoth. Bochart first identified this animal with the hippopotamus, and showed the accuracy of the description. At present the point is universally admitted by scholars. Dr. Tristram says : “ It is clear that the description suits the hippopotamus exactly, and it alone.” The word in Hebrew probably means the great beast, or the beast of beasts, that which combines in the highest degree the marvellous powers and instincts of the gaminivorous animals.

19. Chief of the ways. The masterpiece, so to speak, of creation ; an expression which refers either to its bulk (it reaches seven feet in height and thirteen in length, which exceeds that of the elephant, Hirz.), or, more probably, to its unequalled strength, a point directly bearing upon the argument touching the feebleness of man.

23. *Behold, if a river ravageth, he trembleth not ; he is steadfast, if the Jordan burst upon his mouth !* The word “ ravageth ” means literally “ does injury ”—*i.e.*, by overflowing its banks. The ravages of the Nile when the inundation is unusually high are terrible. In 1864 the whole country was submerged, the cattle destroyed,

and the villagers all but ruined. The quiet confidence with which the heavy brute bears the rush of the formidable inundation may be contrasted with the terror and flight of beasts of prey. *Cook.*—The swollen, rushing stream has no terrors for him. The Jordan was a familiar name and an object of interest to all the descendants of Abraham; and among them would most naturally be named as the representative of any large and powerful stream. It is not implied, therefore, that the river-ox was an inhabitant of the Jordan. *Conant.*

41 : 1-34. *Description of Leviathan.*

1. Leviathan. The word, which properly means a large creature, lithe or folded, may apply either—as in 3 : 8—to a dragon (see note); or—as in Psalms 104 : 26—to a whale; or—as in this chapter—to the crocodile; a point upon which all commentators are now agreed. This interpretation rests upon the accuracy of the description, which, though highly poetical, is neither legendary nor hyperbolic.

1, 2. These two verses evidently imply that the huge crocodile was not, and could not be taken. There were, however, many species—five are now counted by naturalists, and the hieroglyphics indicate a still greater number. The leviathan of this chapter describes the largest and most formidable of all, probably one which no one, in Job's time, dreamed of attacking.

10, 11. These verses point the application of this second discourse. If God's creatures are so great, what must be the terrors of His majesty? *Cook.*—The lesson of these portrayals drawn. Both beasts are vastly more powerful than man—the one mild, the other fierce, yet both owing all they are to God. Shall man alone, who belongs to God in the same sum of things, bring to his Maker an unpaid demand? In all these things has God left man's life unprovided for? We are reminded of the lesson drawn in Isaiah 40 : 26-28. *J. F. G.*

13. "His outer garment" seems to mean the upper side or surface of his coat of scales—his armor; and the question is, Who has turned back or removed this scaly covering? The question seems a general, preliminary one, as the scales are more particularly described in v. 15. *A. B. D.*

Come within his double bridle. The double row of teeth. The two most prominent characteristics are the scales and the jaws, which are dwelt upon in the eight verses following.

14. Round about his teeth is terror. The neck of the war horse is clothed with terror, so terror has its permanent abode in the jaw of the crocodile. *Cook.*—The jaws of the crocodile are very extended; the two rows of long, pointed teeth, thirty-six, it is said, above, and thirty beneath, being bare, as the mouth has no lips, present a formidable appearance.

15-17. His armor of scales. **His scales are his pride.** Rather, *the rows of his shields are a pride.* Each of his scales is a shield, and they are disposed in rows, or courses—literally, *pipes*, so called from their being curved or bossed. Of these rows there are said to be seventeen. The second clause describes the firmness and closeness with which each scale adheres to the body. The sixteenth and seventeenth verses refer to the close coherence of the scales to one another.

18. The eyelids of the morning. The reference may be to the shining of the reddish eyes of the animal, which are seen even under the water before its head comes to the surface. In the Egyptian hieroglyphs the eyes of the crocodile are a symbol of the dawn. *A. B. D.*

19-21. Bartram has observed on the American alligator that as it comes on the land a thick smoke issues from its distended nostrils with a thundering sound. The thick, hot steam produces the impression of a fire existing beneath and bursting forth. The subjective truth of this impression is faithfully but poetically reproduced. *D.*—He is here described as emerging from the water, and violently forcing out the heated breath and steam, which glisten in the sunlight (vs. 20, 21) like smoke and flame from burning coals. These strong expressions are not mere poetic exaggeration. They are such as an eye-witness might use in communicating to others the actual impressions made upon himself, and are therefore the most suitable for conveying the same impressions to us. *Conant.*

22. This translation but imperfectly expresses the magnificent personification of the original, "On his neck dwelleth strength; before him leapeth horror." Horror or despair is described with a terrible irony as exulting in the presence of its lord. *Cook.*—Terror personified as the *avant courier* of the mighty beast, running joyfully and dancing before him. *T. Lewis.*—A bold and striking personification of the two closely related qualities, *strength* and the *dread* it inspires. His neck *is the abode of strength*, for there resides the force which wields

his powers of destruction. *Dances before him*, aptly describes the imbecility of terror. *Conant*.

24. Its heart is firm and obdurate, as though it were of cast brass, hard as stone, and in fact as the nether millstone, which, because it has to bear the weight and friction of the upper, must be particularly hard. It is not intended of actual stone-like hardness, but only of its indomitable spirit and great tenacity of life; the activity of its heart is not so easily disturbed, and even fatal wounds do not so quickly bring it to a stand. *D.*

31. Lastly comes the movement through the water; the images are exact, the chief object of Oriental descriptive poetry, which aims at definiteness and life, regardless of conventional notions of dignity; the immense size of the beast and the impetuosity of his movement throws the whole stream into violent commotion; it seethes and heaves like a caldron of boiling oil. *Cook*.

33. The armor with which the upper part of the body is covered may be numbered among the most elaborate pieces of nature's mechanism. In the full-grown animal it is so strong and thick as easily to repel a musket-ball. The whole animal appears as if covered with the most regular and curious carved work. The mouth is of vast width, the gape having a somewhat flexuous outline, and both jaws being furnished with very numerous, sharp-pointed teeth. The number of teeth in each jaw is thirty or more, and they are so disposed as to alternate with each other when the mouth is closed. The legs are short, but strong and muscular. In the glowing regions of Africa, where it arrives at its full strength and power, it is justly regarded as the most formidable inhabitant of the rivers. *Shaw*.

What impression was such a description calculated to produce? We must remember the profoundly religious and serious character of the Eastern patriarch. When images were presented to his mind which spoke of tremendous power and purposes utterly beyond his conception, he could have no thought but of his own nothingness. It never entered into his spirit to doubt of God's wisdom; but when he reflected upon the marvellous care which God bestowed upon every part of an animal so utterly useless to man, he must have felt that the goodness which was to him but another word for perfect wisdom, must be something far different from that which in his narrowness

and presumption man is wont to assume. *Cook*.
—That the Lord has a right to reign over us; and that we are bound to a cheerful submission to His dispensations toward us, not because we see the reasons of them, but because it is His will concerning us, and we know that He cannot but will our essential good—still form proper grounds of argument with the afflicted, and sometimes indeed amount to nearly all that can be urged. *Kitto*.

The argument of omnipotence insisted on in these four chapters, when duly considered, includes in it a full, perfect, and sufficient vindication of the ways of God with man. For if "He can do all things," and "nothing is impossible with God," He can have no temptation to do wrong; for "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man," though for wise and salutary purposes, for correction, for discipline, for purification of heart and life, and preparation for a better world, He tries the best men, like Job, and proves them in the furnace of affliction, that "they may come forth like gold;" while by His all-governing and all-controlling providence He restrains the craft and subtilty of the devil or man working against them, to shake their faith and "sift them as wheat;" saying to the former, as to the ocean originally, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." At the same time, of His infinite mercy and goodness He is not severe to mark what they have done amiss upon their hearty repentance and true faith; for "He knoweth whereof they are made, He remembereth that they are but dust." *Dr. Hales*.

CHAP. 42 : 1-6. JOB'S PENITENT SUBMISSION TO THE LORD.

This complete submission contains, 1. A full acknowledgment of God's almighty power and supreme dominion (v. 2). By thus glorifying the sovereign authority of God, Job tacitly condemns himself for not having meekly submitted to it. 2. A like acknowledgment of the unsearchable wisdom of Divine providence, with an explicit condemnation of himself for his objections and murmurings against it (v. 3). 3. He humbly begs of God to vouchsafe a gracious audience to his petition, and to instruct him further in his duty (v. 4). 4. He declares that this visible manifestation of the Almighty to him had impressed him with a deeper and more reverent sense of the Divine perfection and majesty than he had before conceived by means

of instruction only (v. 5). Lastly he expresses his repentance in the strongest terms of self-condemnation and humble sorrow (v. 6). This complete submission discloses an alteration infinitely more important and beneficial than any change of Job's outward condition; it shows an alteration in the temper and state of his mind. He is brought back to his duty, and his soul returns to its rest in God. *Scott.*

The Lord has said nothing to crush and exasperate His servant, as the three friends had done. It is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hands of men. In His Word He is patient and kind, and diverts the thought of the sufferer from his own sad case to the contemplation of other objects of Divine care and proofs of Divine wisdom and might. The result is Job's lowly and contrite confession before God. D. F.

In Job's repentance all the marks of evangelical repentance are found—submission and abasement (v. 2); confession of sin (v. 3); humble and believing prayer (v. 4); the revelation of God to the soul (v. 5); and then the blessed result—self-knowledge, self abhorrence, true, deep, lasting repentance: "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (v. 6). *E. Bayley.*—The only skill of this *excellent wrestler* (as one calls him) was to cast himself down at God's foot. There is no way of getting in to God or prevailing with Him but by submitting to Him. The Lord layeth down His rod when we lay down our pride, and casts His sword out of His hand when we cast ourselves at His feet. *Caryl.*

2. The meaning is that there is no purpose which the Almighty cannot carry out. Though literally the words seem merely an acknowledgment of power, they are also an admission of wisdom, the plans or purposes of which may be beyond the understanding of man (v. 3). Job's confession corresponds to the Almighty's address to him. That address did not insist on any one Divine attribute, but rather presented God in the whole circle of His attributes—power and wisdom, but also goodness—for He refreshes the thirsty ground where no man is, He feeds the ravens, and presides over the birth-pangs of the goats of the rock, and His omnipotence goes hand in hand with His moral rule (40 : 9, *seq.*). The Divine nature is not a segment but a circle. Any one Divine attribute implies all others. Omnipotence cannot exist apart from righteousness. Similarly, Job's reply reflects the great general impression of God now made on him. The exercise of the Divine wisdom as it operates in nature has led him to

feel that within his own history also there is a Divine "thought" or "counsel," though he is unable to understand it. It can hardly, however, be the author's purpose to teach the general principle that the "counsel" of God is incomprehensible, because he gives an explanation of it in the prologue. He is not teaching general principles here, but showing the position which just thoughts of God will induce a man to take even when God's dealings may be beyond his understanding. A. B. D.

3. **Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?** The opening of the Lord's address. Job brings it distinctly before his mind and recognizes its justice; clear and bright as his own reasoning had seemed to be, it was but a darkening of counsel. *Cook.*—The very words that had been spoken to Job in reproof he now repeats in the spirit of humiliation and confession. He had spoken unwisely, irreverently, because of his want of spiritual understanding, and had assumed to sit in judgment on the Divine administration in human affairs. This he now sees, and humbles himself with contrition and confession. *Curry.*—He indeed knew previously what he acknowledges (v. 2), but now this knowledge has risen upon him in a new divinely-worked clearness, such as he had not hitherto experienced. Those strange but wondrous works of God are proof to him that God is able to put everything into operation, and that the plans according to which He acts are beyond the reach of human comprehension. He repeats to himself the chastening Word of Jehovah (38 : 2), while he chastises himself with it; for he now perceives that his judgment was wrong, and that he consequently merited the reproof. D.

Which way soever we turn in our search after knowledge, we run against mystery at the second or third step. And a great part of our misery, a still greater of our unbelief, and all the lunatic rage of our scepticism arises in the fact that we either do not, or will not see it to be so. Ignorance trying to comprehend what is inscrutable, and out of patience that it cannot make the high things of God come down to its own petty measures, is the definition of all atheism. There is no true comfort in life, no dignity in reason, apart from modesty. We wrangle with Providence and call it reason, we rush upon God's mysteries, and tear ourselves against the appointments of His throne, and then, because we bleed, complain that He cruelly mocks our understanding. All our disputings and hard speeches are the frothing of our igno-

rance maddened by our pride. Oh, if we could see our own limitations, and how little it is possible for us to know of matters infinite, how much less, clouded by the necessary blindness of a mind disordered by evil, we should then be in a way to learn, and the lessons God will teach would put us in a way to know what now is hidden from us. After all his labored disputings and lofty reasons with his friends, Job turns himself to God and says, "I have uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." *Bushnell.*

4. Job now wished to be heard as an earnest inquirer seeking for instruction. The conviction of his own ignorance caused a desire to be instructed by God Himself. The spirit of the confession in the next verse also dominates this; he sees the folly of his own self-assurances and turns to God, who only can teach man true wisdom. *Curry.*

5. Job's eyes are open at last to perceive the universality both of God's power and wisdom; an all-pervading care in which he is content to take his place, hushing all complaints and trusting where he cannot see. This is the grand outcome of Job's experience; an outcome not merely in a completed argument, but in a chastened, obedient, enlightened character. J. F. G. —Humility and repentance are the result of large acquaintance with God. Job said, *I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee.* It expresses two kinds of knowledge—the one speculative, the other practical. He had formerly a distant and vague acquaintance of God, without contemplating Him by that faith *which seeth Him who is invisible.* He now had an intimate, a deep and practical sense of God, very different from the mere vague conceptions he had when he only heard of Him; that knowledge which is practical, deep, intimate, and profound. The two effects were humility and repentance. Humility is produced by the sight of His greatness, repentance by a knowledge of His purity. It is the union of these that form the idea of God. *R. Hall.*

Mine eye seeth Thee. Man instinctively closes his eyes to see God when he worships or prays, naturally feeling that it is by making himself spiritually conscious of God that he is to meet Him. Yet this is the true meeting, the real encounter. For me to know that I am in the presence of God, and know that He is conscious of me, and know that He knows I am conscious of Him—this is for me to see God—nay, it is far more, it is to meet Him in the most perfect sense. *W. R. Brooks.*

6. **I abhor.** Not *myself* (though that may

be a secondary thought), but *it*—that is, my former misconceptions and rebellion. I retract my proud utterances with deepest abhorrence—I *repudiate* them. *Curry.*—Job confesses now that he had not really heard God's word before—that is, received it in its full meaning; it was, so far as regarded the special cause of his spiritual trial, as though he knew it not. It was a mere hearing with the ear of sense, but now he sees God with the eye of the spirit; now he can see himself in his true proportions, and he submits with utter humiliation of heart. Does this imply that he now surrenders his righteousness, thus doing just that which was the object of all the temptations of Satan and of his misjudging friends to induce him to do? Yes, in one sense, inasmuch as he no longer holds to it as a principle on which he may trust in a controversy with his Maker; but not in a sense which was contemplated by the author of those temptations, for Job knows that his relative righteousness—sincerity of intention and singleness of heart—is recognized by God, and proved by His condescension in answering and satisfying his inward craving. *Cook.*

This humble confession and self-abasement of Job was graciously accepted; it covered all his imperfections; his passionate complaints wrung from him by the extremity of sufferings, corporeal and mental; his despair and weariness of life; his frequent wishes for death; his eagerness to enter upon his trial; his earnest request, and even expostulations with his Judge, to bring him to it, or, at least, to acquaint him with the reasons of such severe afflictions. Such shades and blemishes in the character of this illustrious Patriarch argue somewhat of impatience in this heroic pattern of patience. But God is ever ready to pass over the frailties and infirmities of human nature, where there is a tried and resolute integrity, determined to adhere to God in all trials and temptations, whatever may be the result. *Dr. Hales.*

The past hard experience has brought Job immeasurably nearer to God. The grand conclusion, the sum total is expressed not in words, but in life: "Now' mine eye seeth Thee." Need one whose eyes are opened by such a hard schooling ask why it was given? The answer is self-evident. Less than such stern discipline would not have produced such beauty and strength of human character. Less than such severe chastening would not have quickened Job's vision to see how subtly selfish motives may work to impair the friendships and the wisdom of earth, and how sufficing is the refuge provided in the eternal Love beyond this life.

And the answer thus embodied in the Patriarch's experience is a world-answer, pointing to that mystery of travail and suffering which everywhere underlies the deepest insight, the highest achievements. Shall we ask why God invades our ease and scourges us onward and upward to the table-lands of vision? The new horizon and the purer air and the stronger muscles are the sufficient reason. J. F. G.

Job's afflictions have not abated yet. His terrible losses are still as great as they were, and his bodily sufferings are as grievous. But the cloud is gone. He has lost all disposition to murmur or repine. He can trust the infinitely holy and mighty and wise and gracious One to do whatsoever seemeth Him good. It is good if God does it; it is the best thing possible; no man at least, nor any finite being, could alter it for the better; and Job would not have it otherwise. The temptation is not vanquished now; it has disappeared. Job has now come to the end of the third, which is the last and most fearful stage of the temptation. The struggle has been tremendous. It has been a long and a wearisome and a desperately contested conflict. But the issue is glorious. The forces of the enemy are not merely driven back, and left to rally and return again to the charge. They are positively annihilated, and the victory is complete and final. Sublime as was Job's resignation in the first and second stages of his afflictions, it is sublimer now. W. H. G.

Strange to tell, the closing picture of Job is not that of a conqueror, but a confessor, not of an enthroned prince, but of a kneeling penitent. The unexpected revolution is effected by the revelation of God to the eye of the soul. Job knows God as he did not know Him before. The character of his knowledge is changed, heightened, vitalized, intensified, personalized. God is no longer a voice crying in the wilderness, but a Presence in his heart and before his spiritual eye. Here then is one signal value of the knowledge of God, even of His immense power and greatness. By the knowledge of God is the knowledge of self, in the knowledge of self is the knowledge of sin, through the knowledge of personal sin we come to repentance, and by a baptism in the fiery waters of repentance we pass to the reality and strength of life. Such God-inspired penitence swiftly vindicates itself in the pure sincerity and holy brotherhood it

creates and the reconciliation it effects between man and men and man and his lot. The voice of prayer is exchanged for the clash of debate; the incense of reconciling sacrifice ascends in place of the smoke of anger and scorn. *J. Clifford.*

Surely when men indulge the fancy that they may stand before God on the meritorious ground of their own virtues they forget what God is, with whom they have to do. They forget both His perfect holiness and His omniscience. Would the best of us be willing that even an earthly friend should be privy to all his words, all his actions, all his thoughts, all his desires, all his purposes, all his emotions? Think, then, of Him who "searcheth the heart and the reins." He is "greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." He knows whether we think about Him, often or seldom; and when we do think of Him, what our thoughts of Him are, worthy or unworthy. He knows whether we bow the knee to Him in secret, whether frequently or rarely; and whether the heart is bowed with the knee. He follows us from the closet to the family, and from the family to the intercourse of public life. He searches our hearts all the while. He knows how much greater influence, in restraining us from what is evil, the thought of some fellow-creature's presence has than the assurance of His. He knows all our sins of omission as well as commission; how often we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and have left undone those things which we ought to have done. He has known all from the beginning, every moment; and the entire catalogue of our demerits is, at the same instant, present to His mind, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon sin." Such considerations may well draw from every heart the exclamation of Job: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And whither, with this overwhelming conviction on his conscience and heart, can the sinner betake himself but to the cross? There alone are forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace and hope to be found. There the omniscient God, with the full knowledge of all the sinner's guilt, cancels it forever when that sinner makes the cross and the blood shed on it his plea for mercy. *R. Wardlaw.*

CHAPTER XLII., 7-17.

7 AND it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends : for ye have not spoken of me the thing that
8 is right, as my servant Job hath. Now therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering ; and my servant Job shall pray for you ; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly ; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job
9 hath. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them : and the LORD accepted Job.
10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends : and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had be-
11 fore. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that

had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house : and they bemoaned him, and comforted him concerning all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him : every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one a ring of gold.
12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning : and he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a
13 thousand she-asses. He had also seven sons
14 and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemimah ; and the name of the second, Keziah : and the name of the
15 third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job : and their father gave them in-
16 heritance among their brethren. And after this Job lived an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, *even*
17 four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.

THREE things we have met with in this book which have troubled me much ; but we find all the three grievances thoroughly redressed in this chapter—everything set to rights. It has been a great trouble to us to see such a holy man as Job was so fretful and peevish, and especially to hear him quarrel with God and speak indecently to Him ; but, though he thus fall, he is not utterly cast down, for here he comes to himself and to his right mind again by repentance, is sorry for what he has said amiss, unsays it and humbles himself before God. It has been likewise a great trouble to us to see Job and his friends so much at variance, not only differing in their opinions, but giving one another a great many hard words and passing severe censures one upon another, though they were all very wise and good men ; but here we have this grievance redressed likewise, the differences between them happily adjusted, the quarrel taken up, all the peevish reflections they had cast upon one another forgiven and forgotten, and all joining in sacrifices and prayers, mutually accepted of God. It has troubled us to see a man of such eminent piety and usefulness as Job was so grievously afflicted, so pained, so sick, so poor, so reproached, so slighted, and made the very centre of all the calamities of human life ; but here we have this grievance redressed too ; Job healed of all his ailments, more honored and

beloved than ever, enriched with an estate double to what he had before, surrounded with all the comforts of life, and as great an instance of prosperity as ever he had been of affliction and patience. All this is written for our learning, that we, under these and the like discouragements that we meet with, through patience and comfort of the Scripture, may have hope. H.

7-17. Jehovah, having confounded all the false reasonings of Job and sufficiently humbled him, proceeds now to condemn the principle maintained by the three friends, which He affirms “not to be right.” As an atonement, therefore, for their behavior He commands them to offer a sacrifice for themselves ; and as some compensation to Job, they have the mortifying penance enjoined them of begging his prayers in their behalf. He, whom they had represented as the vilest of men, was the only intercessor whom God would accept. Job is at length not only restored to his former prosperity, but as a recompense for his past sufferings blessings flow in upon him in a double tide, which he enjoys to a very old age, and leaves to a numerous posterity. *Heath.*—Job's unreserved submission terminates his trial. His integrity is recognized, and his friends are declared not to have spoken the truth, a fault which, however, as proceeding from a mistaken apprehension of Divine justice, is pardoned on the intercession

of Job. The restoration of Job's earthly prosperity, which is an inevitable result of the Divine manifestation, symbolizes the final compensation of the righteous for all the sufferings of life. *Cook.*

7. The Lord blames the three friends for not speaking that which was right concerning *Him*, not concerning Job; He also commends Job for speaking what was right concerning Him. It is obvious that the three friends spoke many just and profound things concerning God, and that Job, on the other hand, said many things that were both blameworthy and false, things for which he was both rebuked by the Almighty and expressed his penitence. The reference cannot be to such things as these. Neither can the charge made against the friends here be merely that brought against them by Job, that they did not speak in honesty and sincerity, though this may be included. Rather, the friends are blamed for speaking in regard to God that which was not right, or true, *in itself*; and the reference must be to the theories they put forth in regard to God's providence and the meaning of afflictions. On this point the friends spoke in regard to God what was not right, while Job spoke that which was right. A. B. D.

The friends affirmed these great mistakes: that all the sufferings and afflictions which befall man in this world are laid upon him by God as a punishment for sin; that all wicked men sooner or later are visibly punished for sin in this life; that though a good man may possibly suffer grievous afflictions in this life, yet God always delivers him out of them before he departs this life. Hence if a man for long continuance of time be continued in great calamity, that man must be judged wicked, though no apparent wickedness can be charged upon or proved against him. Upon these unsound principles they were all confident to infer that Job was a hypocrite, and that all those troubles which befell him were inflicted by the righteous hand of God as a punishment for his sin. *Caryl.*

To these friends of Job no other idea ever occurs than that a man suffers because he is a sinner. They had never yet caught the great Gospel idea of Jesus and His apostles that a man might be made to suffer more *because he is a saint*; that his suffering may not always be a punishment, but rather a token of love; a means of ripening glory; a blessing in disguise; so that oftentimes the saint has occasion to say: "It was good for me that I have been afflicted." Thus from reasoning on a false principle to confute Job and bring him to repentance these

friends, in seeking to confute and convict him of irreverence, gave all the weight of their influence against God's cause. S. R.—Their ignorance regarding the meaning and design of God's dealings with Job was not reprehensible. This could not have been otherwise, for they had no means of knowing it. But what cannot be excused in them is that they undertook to expound, as though they had full knowledge in the case, what they did not understand; and in so doing rested the Divine procedure on insufficient reasons, and sought to square it by their own limited notions. They were inexcusable in another respect. They not only entered a weak and unsuitable plea as the only one upon which the cause of God could be rested or His providence justified, but they made allegations which they had no means of knowing to be true, and which, in fact, were not true; they were mere inferences from the false premises on which they were conducting the defence of the Divine government. In defending the cause of religion and of piety, as they professed to do, they were guilty of making rash and reckless assertions; they were unjust to Job in not only harboring baseless suspicions, but in venturing upon positive declarations of his guilt in matters of which he was wholly innocent; they were shamefully cruel to their suffering friend, causelessly aggravating his distress, which professedly they had come to soothe, when he was already weighed down by troubles that might have disarmed malice itself and softened hearts of stone. No exigencies of their argument could justify a course like this. And no straits in which the defence of God's righteous government and the claims of religion seemed to be could justify it. If the Divine administration could not be honestly and truthfully defended, and without a resort to what is questionable or false, they should have retired from its defence, and concluded that they were not called of God to be His champions in this particular. More than this, they had really inculcated the providence of God by their professed defence of it. By covering up and ignoring its enigmas and seeming contradictions they had cast more discredit upon it than Job by honestly holding them up to the light. Their denial of its apparent inequalities was more untrue and more dishonoring to the Divine administration, as it is in fact conducted, than Job's bold affirmation of them. Even his most startling utterances wrung from him in his bewilderment and sore perplexity were less reprehensible than their false statements and false inferences. W. H. G.

Job hath (*spoken of Me the thing that is*

right). This decision, while not to be interpreted as a sanction of the whole of Job's language, must be understood to convey an approval of its substance and groundwork; and to pronounce that his argument was true, and his feeling legitimate and right in the main. It must be remembered that there is a wide distinction between that movement of natural passion which has a reason and that which has not, and that exactly the same amount of temper which is fretfulness in one case is natural or constitutional anger in another. *Mozley.*—

This expression of approval has a reference to his share in the previous argument with the friends, and is designed to express a comparative preference of the views he had set forth in that argument. This will appear the more clearly when it is borne in mind that the arguments and illustrations adduced by the Lord Himself do not really convey any rebuke of Job's main position, but only to the incidents of temper and character—the impatience, the recklessness, and the presumption which had been manifested by him in the course of the debate. Still this praise is to be taken rather as comparative than as absolute. Both had about equally erred in their views as to the nature of sin; but Job had put this part of the charge against him out of court by his penitent confession. The removal of this fault in his argument, seeing he had expressly recalled it, while it remained on theirs, would alone give the balance in his favor had all else been equal. But, in fact, the main position which Job had defended was correct, though he was unable to grasp all its bearings, and more than that which the friends had upheld, tended to vindicate the Divine government. It is clear that inasmuch as Job had an essentially good case, but marred it by many vain and unseemly utterances; so the friends had an essentially wrong case, although they supported it by many goodly reasons, and by words out of which much holy doctrine may be gathered. *Kitto.*

7, 8. My servant Job. God calls him again and again *His servant Job*, four times in two verses, and He seems to take a pleasure in calling him so, as *before* his troubles—“*Hast thou considered My servant Job?*” Though he is poor and despised, he is My servant, and as dear to Me as when he was in prosperity; though he has his faults, and has appeared to be a man subject to like passions as others; though he has contended with Me, has gone about to disannul My judgment, and has darkened counsel by words without knowledge, yet he sees his error and retracts it, and therefore he is My servant Job

still.” If we still hold fast the integrity and fidelity of servants to God, as Job did, though we may for a time be deprived of the credit and comfort of the relation, we shall be restored to it at last, as he was. The devil had undertaken to prove Job a hypocrite, and his three friends had condemned him as a wicked man; but God will confess those whom He accepts, and will not suffer them to be run down by the malice of hell or earth. If God says, *Well done, good and faithful servant*, it is of little consequence who says otherwise. H.

8. Jehovah has now risen up as a witness for Job; the spiritual redemption is already accomplished; and all that is wanting is that He who has acknowledged and testified to Job as His servant should also act outwardly and visibly, and in mercy show Himself the righteous One. D.

9, 10. Only the compliance of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar with the requirement is named, leaving the natural inference that they were accepted with their offerings. The *turning* of the captivity of Job is the great point of interest—a phrase that simply indicates that from this point Job's great affliction, comparable to a terrible captivity, was exchanged for returning health and joy and prosperity. *Curry.*

10. It was an honor put on Job, and likewise a testimony of his meek and loving spirit, that he prayed for his friends. Nor can we have stronger proof that our prayers and intercessions for others, especially for our offending brethren, are acceptable to God than what is here related. For *then* “the Lord turned the captivity of Job,” when his resentment against his accusers was extinguished, and he put up to heaven charitable petitions for them. The sufferer was restored to health, abundance, and prosperity. He received twice as much property as he had before possessed, so that his latter end was better than his beginning. The Lord gave him favor among an extensive acquaintance, a very large property, a numerous issue, and an honorable old age. It is delightful to trace the dealings of God toward His people and their faith in Him, which are the same in all ages. The very truths that supported Job under his sorrows remain to the present day, firm as the pillars of heaven, an unshaken basis of confidence for the people of God. *E. Copley.*

With this simple conclusion the author of the book seems to have ended. The six remaining verses, particularizing the increase, the number of his sons and daughters, and the names of the

latter, who, according to primitive usage, were made coheiresses with their brothers ; and the number of years that Job survived his trial, form an appendix which, probably, was added in later times by whoever introduced the book into the sacred canon. *Hales.*

11. When Job had humbled himself and God had accepted him, he quickly turned the hearts of his friends to regard him with kindness. *Clark.*—*Every man also gave him a piece of money.* It was an ancient custom, which is still observed in the East, never to visit a person of distinction without paying him the compliment of a present. It is uncertain whether one kind of present made to Job on this occasion was a sheep, or a piece of money that had the figure of a sheep stamped upon it. *Scott.*

12. So the Lord blessed. The theism of revelation rests upon one fact—the love of God for man ; and aims at one fact—the love of man for God. In the relation to one another of two living creatures who love each other tenderly, do we not see how every grief suffered by one in presence of the other strengthens the link of affection which unites them, and calls forth a still more lively manifestation of it ? And does not every new act of devotion make the flame of satisfied and even grateful love on the part of the being so faithfully loved break forth into view ? It is no question of payment of what has been earned ; it is love called forth by love exhibited, and answering to it with eagerness. “So the Lord *blessed*, not rewarded, the latter end of Job.” The restoration of Job does not then rest upon any servile notion of works of merit, but upon the value which love sets upon love. Love appreciates love above all things—loves essentially only it. If God is love, and if, being such, He has willed to be loved, how should He not in His turn, having found what He seeks, manifest Himself emphatically as the loving God ? Were He to act otherwise, His creature would be better than Himself. *Godet.*

Job’s trials are at length over. He has been convinced, pardoned, vindicated, and accepted. Nor was this all ; he was healed of his sore disease, and restored to a prosperous estate. And, yet more—for the Lord is very bountiful to His servants—he was not merely restored to all he had before possessed, but all things were given back in double measure to him ; all except children, of whom he eventually gained the same number he had lost. *How* the restoration of his wealth was effected we are not told, nor are we required to suppose that it took place all at once. We know that in the case of his new family, for instance, the restoration must have

been gradual, and so it was probably of the rest. And with regard to Job’s possessions being *doubled* after his recovery from his calamities, it is not necessary to suppose that this was exactly true to the letter. The statement is justified if by the recapture of some of his possessions from the robbers, by the gifts of friends, and by remarkable prosperity in all his doings, his possessions were eventually brought to something nearly double what they were before his trials commenced. In the statement itself there is nothing improbable. Job lived one hundred and forty years after his trials. If he then had only the same measure of prosperity as before, with such assistances as we have indicated to enable him to begin life again, there is nothing improbable in his possessions being doubled. *Kitto.*—So does God pour out upon Job all the tokens of His love, as if to make up to him for the extreme anguish which he had gone through for the manifestation of His glory both in heaven and in hell. *Godet.*

In the result he is pardoned and restored ; and the conclusion is such as to sanction the prevalent idea of the finally retributive character, even in this world, of the Divine government ; for “the Lord blessed his latter end more than his beginning,” restoring double to him of all his prosperity and wealth. This, in fact, was the argument of the friends of Job ; but the fault was that they did not wait “to see the end.” Even in their view of the Divine government by temporal retribution, it is visibly impossible safely to pass such judgments as they were in haste to pronounce, until the end of all is seen, for there is no afflicted man whose prosperity may not be restored with large increase ; and, while that remains possible, no judgment upon his conduct can be founded upon his condition, which may be but temporary—may be but an incident in his career. *Kitto.*

16, 17. Job lived a hundred and forty years. Abraham lived 175 years, and Moses 120 ; but if to Job’s 140 after his restoration be added 80, or even 60 years, to which age all the facts brought into the light would indicate that he must have lived before his afflictions come upon him, then his whole number of years must have been 200 or more, which is about the age (205) to which Terah, the father of Abraham, attained. It is not altogether unreasonable to presume that by thus signifying the age to which the patriarchal hero of the poem lived, the author meant to indicate the date in the world’s history in which he would locate the scenes that he describes. *Curry.*

The length of days and unexampled prosper-

ity granted to Job should not be regarded as a compensation for sufferings, but as the outward and visible indication of Divine favor, of which the future manifestation was as yet a matter of hope rather than a sure belief founded on revelation. *Cook.*

17. Job dies, old and full of days. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5 : 11). A. B. D.

God looks more upon the bright side of the cloud than the dark. "*Remember the patience of Job*" (James 5 : 11). It is not, "Remember the murmuring of Job, the complainings of Job, the impatience of Job," but "*Remember the patience of Job.*" God looks upon the pearl, and not upon the spot that is in it. *T. Brooks.*—All that Job is told is that God most surely loved him; that He will not answer his eager and passionate questions, but that through them all and in spite of them all he is dear to Him because he had loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and that for these things God cares, and cares infinitely; and in the sense of this and of God's power and wisdom he must rest content. And he is told also that trouble and affliction do not prove God's displeasure; that the very heaviest, the most overwhelming blows may come from a Maker who is full of love to him on whom they fall—may come, as did Job's, from causes far beyond his power to comprehend or guess, and that he need not look on God as his persecutor or his enemy—not shrink from Him, but draw closer and closer to Him in his trouble, and trust Him more wholly. And his story reminds us of God's mercy and forbearance to those who are under sorrow; of the larger, the other eyes with which He may look on the impatience, the bewilderment, the fretfulness, even the doubts and questionings of His servants. The impatience, as it seems to us, of Job is answered by the patience and pitifulness of Job's God: "*The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy*"—and this, surely, is much. *Dean Bradley.*

"*In your patience, ye shall win your souls,*" are the words of the Master (Luke 21 : 19). Patience is active as well as passive. It includes the persistent energy which wins no less than the submissiveness which bears. The popular conception of patience is too narrow. The popular phrase, "As patient as Job," is applied to a man who submits to trouble without murmuring. In this aspect Job's patience is not a model. He chafed under his trouble, not so

much indeed at his bodily suffering as at his inability to understand what God meant by it; he murmured and impugned God's justice, and well-nigh blasphemed in his frenzied wrestle with this problem. And yet the core of this struggle reveals the truth of Christ's words. The man's thought was absorbed, not by the relations of this calamity to his flocks and herds and family and health, but by its relations to himself as a son of God and a believer in God. His fear centred in the possibility that God had forsaken his soul; and Job's patience appears in his holding fast by that thought, and in his steadily fighting his way toward God through all that agony, even though at times he raved at the Almighty. He clung to the hand that smote him, even while he struck at it, as the only hand which could unlock the mystery. He pressed his way through the darkness, groping after God. If he could but see God! If he could but come into court with God and make his plea to His face! If God would only speak to him! And at last he prevailed. God did speak to him. Job's soul was calmed, though it was humbled to the dust. He won his soul in his patience. *Vincent.*

The explanation of the sufferings of God's dear children, as suggested by the case of Job, may be embraced in the following particulars. They afford to all gainsayers a palpable test of their integrity. The very intensity of the struggle develops their faith and other graces, and leads them on to clearer views of heavenly truth. These sorrows are sent on the part of God with a gracious design, and afford the occasion of His revealing Himself to chastened souls with new fulness and power, in consequence of which they are brought nearer to Him than ever before, and their happiness and welfare are proportionally promoted. *W. H. G.*—Job's recorded history shows that God sometimes permits the best men to be afflicted by Satan, and that most grievously, to prove their faith, patience, humility, and resignation to His will; that this world is not a perfect state of retribution for virtue and vice; but that all the inequalities which are to be found here will be completely redressed in a future state, in which the good will be finally rewarded and the wicked punished. Job, indeed, was one of the best men that ever lived; but he was not exempt from the frailties and infirmities of human nature, and he failed under his last and sorest trial. Still, with all his imperfections, he will shine forth to the end of time an admirable example and an heroic pattern of piety and patience, to be exceeded only by that inim-

itable Standard of perfection who, in His state of humiliation, was "meek and lowly of heart;" who was "in all points tempted like as we are," and that "by the devil," but yet "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth;" and who was "perfected by sufferings" in this life, that He might be transcendently "exalted at the right hand of God"—the blessed "Seed of the woman," the man Jesus Christ. *Hales.*

The Book of Job is a book of consolation for the New Testament Church. From it we learn that we have not only to fight with flesh and blood, but with the prince of this world, and to accomplish our part in the conquest of evil, to which from the first promise (Gen. 3 : 15) on-

ward the history of the world tends; that faith and avenging justice are absolutely distinct opposites; that the right kind of faith clings to Divine love in the midst of the feeling of wrath; that the incomprehensible ways of God always lead to a glorious issue, and that the suffering of the present time is far outweighed by the future glory—a glory not always revealed in this life and visible future, but the final glory above. The nature of faith, the mystery of the cross, the right practice of the care of souls—this, and much besides, the Church learns from this book, the whole teaching of which can never be thoroughly learned and completely exhausted. D.

BOOK OF PROVERBS.

INTRODUCTION.

“PROVERBS” has become in the LXX, the Vulgate, and the Authorized Version, the common heading of the book. It would seem, however, as if there had been at one time another name given to it as a title of honor. Like the two books of analogous nature in the Apocrypha, which probably took their title from it, it was known as the Book of Wisdom. So it was described in the Talmud. So it was named by the great body of early Christian writers. E. H. P.

Properly and strictly speaking, most of Solomon's Proverbs are rather to be called maxims or sentences. A proverb is a short moral sentence which means something else than what the words naturally and literally imply—that is to say, it must be expressed in a figurative manner. When Solomon says, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not onto thine own understanding,” this is no proverb, but a moral sentence. When he says, “Drink waters out of thine own cistern,” this is a proverb; and it means, “Meddle not with that which belongs to another.” These Proverbs of Solomon are a collection of wise and moral sayings, usually plain and concise; they also fall into metre, and, therefore, were the more easily learned and remembered by those in whose language they were written. *Jortin*.—In its most usual form the proverb is a brief, sententious maxim or saying, naturally conforming somewhat to the laws of Hebrew poetic parallelism, and therefore in two parts, one of which is usually antithetic to the other. Thus (10 : 1), “A wise son makes a glad father; a foolish son, a heavy-hearted mother.” The first half gives the wise son; the second, the foolish. The joy of the father in the former is set over against the grief of the mother in the latter. This antithetic po-

sition makes the thought more distinct. Contrast heightens its force. This antithesis is not always apparent without close and searching attention. It may lie between what is affirmed in one clause and what is merely implied in the other. Proverbs of this class are a sort of enigma or riddle, “a dark saying” (1 : 6), designed to test the sagacity and tax the wits of the reader, and so heighten his interest and perhaps deepen the impression of the truth when he has searched it out. Thus in the proverb (10 : 8), “The wise in heart will receive instruction, but a prating fool shall fall,” there is a double antithesis: (1) The wise-hearted man (instead of prating perpetually himself) hears and receives advice; while the fool prates with deaf ears. And (2) the wise man (it is implied) lives and prospers by means of the wise counsels which he both hears and obeys; while the prating fool, neither hearing nor heeding counsel, falls into remediless ruin—this secondary antithesis lying between what is affirmed of the fool and what is left to be inferred of the wise. This proverb is a “dark saying” to the reader until he has studied out this implied idea and has thus reached the full sense. There is, however, a considerable range of diversity in the manner of making up these proverbs. Some of them are comparisons, “As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him” (10 : 26); or the comparison is blended with the antithetic arrangement, “As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation;” where the passing away of the wicked is first compared to a whirlwind, and then put in contrast with the enduring life and blessedness of the righteous. The proverb proper is complete in a single verse. Of this sort are those which stand in 10-22 : 16. But in the first nine chapters, and also in the last

seven, the same subject is usually continued through two or more successive verses. H. C.

This book is attributed (1 : 1) to Solomon, who was the son of David and his successor on the throne of Israel. The book itself makes the last two chapters an exception, ascribing chap. 30 to one Agur, and chap. 31 to a certain King Lemuel and his mother. The fact that while the book in general is ascribed to Solomon, these special exceptions and these only appear in the book itself, is presumptive evidence that all the rest is the work of Solomon, and was so regarded by the original compilers. A distinct notice of this work of compilation appears in the opening of chap. 25, which is justly supposed to include the five chapters immediately following (25-29) as having been collected and compiled ("copied out") by certain men assigned to this service by King Hezekiah. H. C.—Of his three thousand proverbs, less than one-third are here preserved. Of his thousand and five songs we have a yet smaller proportion. And of his extensive writings upon natural history none remain. B.—The Jewish commentators place the composition of the Proverbs in the middle life of the king. Living about two hundred and sixty years before the reign of Cyrus, under whom the seven wise men of Greece flourished, and six hundred and seventy years before Alexander the Great, under whom lived Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, it is evident that Solomon could have drawn no part of the materials for his collection of proverbs from heathen moralists and philosophers. It seems more probable that *they* derived much valuable information from the writings of the renowned monarch of Israel. *Muen-scher*.

The proverbs of the Gentile nations are almost all of anonymous origin—concentrations of many men's wisdom, or expressions of a popular humor, or national turn of thought, floating down, in the concise form of the apothegm, from an unknown antiquity. But almost all the proverbs of the Hebrews are due to the wit and wisdom of one man whom God had specially endowed. David was not more thoroughly trained to be the Psalmist of Israel than Solomon was qualified to be the master of practical admonition. From the first he had every princely advantage; he acquired every accomplishment of science and letters, and gifted with extraordinary powers of observation, he knew human character and life thoroughly, and could describe what he knew with wonderful terseness

and point, his spirit also being enlightened by the Spirit of the Lord. D. F.

In this book Solomon was inspired to use his surpassing wisdom and acquired knowledge and to interpret the lessons of his own wide experience in the setting forth of wise, practical counsels for all that should live after him. This he did in brief moral sentences, using either the proverb, a figurative form of expression, or the maxim, a plain statement. His aim is to set forth the principles and rules of right living in this world. His themes include almost every topic touching personal and social relations, rights and duties, and bearing upon the welfare of the individual, the family, and the community. The book, therefore, embodies an inspired manual of ethics or right acting. For the individual it furnishes all essential counsels pertaining to sobriety, purity and all probity, as well as to industry and economy. And, says Coleridge, it is "the best statesman's manual that was ever written. An adherence to the political economy and spirit of that collection of apothegms and essays would do more to eradicate from a people the causes of extravagance, debasement, and ruin than all the contributions to political economy of Say, Smith, Malthus, and Chalmers together." Further, though civilization changes by steady advances and though customs differ, yet man's nature and acting are the same in every age and among every people. Hence these terse, energetic sentences, each unfolding or summing up some principle of right living in the positive form of counsel or the negative one of warning, must ever have a universal application; and, though not often directly containing distinctive *Christian* instruction, yet the spirit of their inculcations is always in harmony with the precepts of Christ and His apostles. B.

Solomon judiciously sums up his precepts in brief, energetic sentences, which are well contrived for popular instruction. The wisdom of all ages hath chosen to compress its lessons into compendious sentences, which were peculiarly adapted to the simplicity of earlier times; which are readily conceived and easily retained, and which circulate in society as useful principles to be unfolded and applied as occasion may require. The inspired son of David had the power of giving peculiar energy and weight to this style of writing, and his works have been the storehouse from which posterity hath drawn its best maxims. His proverbs are so justly founded on principles of human nature, and so

adapted to the permanent interests of man, that they agree with the manners of every age, and may be assumed as rules for the direction of our conduct in every condition of life, however varied in its complexion or diversified by circumstances ; they embrace not only the concerns of private morality, but the great objects of political importance. *Gray.*

Although the Proverbs are not a part of the Gospel, in its limited sense, yet they prescribe in morals, manners, and social and relative duties the same things for substance which the Gospel, in its fuller and enlarged sense, requires. We may now employ them to inculcate justice, prudence, temperance, chastity, industry, and, in a word, all the duties usually denominated either moral, social, or industrial ; and also reverence for God and for His commandments. We have many and excellent moral and religious precepts in the New Testament, and most of them in a form which is not to be bettered. But the Book of Proverbs touches many points not fully developed in the New Testament, and assists greatly in guiding the simple into the way of wisdom. All the proverbs are adapted to regulate our moral, religious, social, and civil demeanor. Some *principles* of conduct, some *rules* of life, some *cautions* adapted to produce sobriety and regularity, lie upon the face of the whole book. *M. S.*

As we have no book so useful to us in our devotions as David's Psalms, so we have none so serviceable to us for the right ordering of our conversations as Solomon's Proverbs, which, as David says of the commandments, are *exceeding broad*, containing in a little compass a complete body of Divine ethics, politics, and economics ; exposing every vice, recommending every virtue, and suggesting rules for the government of ourselves in every relation and condition, and every turn of conversation. *H.*—What a vast collection of sayings we have in this book relating to human life, to human duty ; the fear of God, charity to man, modesty, humility, forbearance, industry, self-denial ! Here we see that one plain use and design of the whole book is to give us a quantity of short and summary expressions of deep truths of practice, such as we can carry about with us and call to mind when we want them. This book will imprint upon our minds the great truths of God's providence and the profundity of God's judgment. The proverbs show Divine justice already partially commenced and exhibited in this life ; and the Gospel carries out this view, and completes it in the world of futurity. *Mozley.*

It is impossible for any description of persons

to read the Book of Proverbs without profit. Fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, sons, daughters, masters, and servants may here also learn their respective duties ; and the most excellent rules are laid down not only in reference to morality, but to civil policy and economy. Many motives are employed by the wise man to accomplish the end at which he aims ; motives derived from honor, interest, love, fear, natural affection, and piety toward God. The principal object Solomon has in view is to inspire a deep reverence for God, fear of His judgments, and an ardent love for wisdom and virtue. He exhibits injustice, impiety, profligacy, idleness, imprudence, drunkenness, and almost every vice in such lively colors as to render every man ashamed of them who has any true respect for his interest, honor, character, or for himself. And as there is nothing so directly calculated to ruin young men as bad company, debauchery, and irregular connections, he labors to fortify his disciple with the most convincing reasons against all these vices. *A. Clarke.*

The Book of Proverbs is not on a level with the Prophets or the Psalms. It approaches human things and things Divine from quite another side. It has even something of a worldly, prudential look, unlike the rest of the Bible. But this is the very reason why its recognition as a sacred book is so useful. It is the philosophy of practical life. It impresses upon us in the most forcible manner the value of intelligence and prudence, and of a good education. The whole strength of the Hebrew language and of the sacred authority of the book is thrown upon these homely truths. It deals, too, in that refined, discriminating, careful view of the finer shades of human character so necessary to any true estimate of human life. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and the stranger does not intermeddle with its joy." How much is there in that single sentence of consolation, of love, of forethought ! And above all it insists over and over again upon the doctrine that goodness is "*wisdom*" and that wickedness and vice are "*folly*." There may be other views of virtue and vice, of holiness and sin, higher and better than this. But there will be always some in the world who will need to remember that a good man is not only religious and just, but wise ; and that a bad man is not only wicked and sinful, but a miserable, contemptible fool. *Stanley.*

The Book of Proverbs reveals a state of society in the cities of Solomon's empire not unlike what prevails among ourselves. The same passions are seen at work ; the same desires ;

the same strength, and the same feebleness of virtue. A greed of gain, which brought about its owner's ruin and death, meets a reader at the beginning of the book and darkens many a saying to the end. The search for wisdom was neglected for the finding or the making of money. Nothing was allowed to stand in the way. In spite of the curses of a starving people, dealers withheld their corn from sale till enormous gains rewarded them, contrary to the spirit of Hebrew law. Unjust trading in other forms contrived to acquire great revenues, while righteous dealing secured only what is called "a better little." False balances and unjust weights were common, the hope of gain outweighing the loss sure to follow on detection. The pursuit of wealth was thus the fruitful mother of selfishness and wrong-doing in every form. Men broke their words or faithlessly repudiated their engagements. But the extensive commerce of Solomon's reign also presented chances of honorably realizing great riches, which were unknown to the simpler tastes of a former generation. Nor were these chances lightly esteemed by the public sentiment. "In all labor there is profit," says the writer, correctly laying down the first principle of our political economy; "but the talk of the lips tendeth to penury." A mere talker was contemptible in his sight. A true worker was one who profited by honest labor, and of whom the further saying held good, "The crown of the wise is their riches." Wealth, unjustly got, brought many evils in its train. Justice was not always administered with purity: "A mean man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men." Princes and judges gave way also to wine and strong drink. Drunkenness had become common. A staggering winebibber was not an unusual sight in the streets. He is compared to the voyager on a stormy sea, who chooses for his bed the unsteady top of a mast in a swaying, pitching ship. And never was a more graphic description written of the helpless drunkard, muttering incoherent thoughts to himself, than "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath quarrels? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine" (23:29). Fools attained to high positions which would have been beyond their hopes had not money formed a ladder up which they could climb. A fool without wealth is a fool, and nothing more. A rich fool may be laughed at or used to point the moral of a sharp saying. Sometimes he becomes a danger to society as well as himself.

Indecent women seem to have abounded in the cities of Palestine. They are not said to have been of Hebrew birth. As a vast body of heathen laborers were pressed into the king's service and transported from home to the Lebanon woods, many women must have been left destitute and friendless. The indecency which was the curse of Solomon's large cities may have largely arisen from this forcible shifting of the population. Honest women, again, were the fairest ornament and the strongest bulwark of the land. Nothing is more striking in the Book of Proverbs than the contrast drawn between the two classes. Shame and ruin attend the one; wealth and honor follow the other. Deceit and treachery were waiting at street corners to snare unwary youth. Honorable marriage and vows honorably kept enabled thrifty women to place their husbands among the rulers of the land, to clothe all their household in scarlet, and to fill their houses with every good thing. A virtuous wife is compared to "the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from far." What men and women are to-day in the various duties and labors of life, they were also in the age of Solomon. Nothing is changed; but experience has added many an example to confirm the grand aim of his proverbial philosophy, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life." *Sime.*

This book is the great book in the Bible for the young. The proverbs are the words of a father to his children. The main form of address is "My son," because young men are most exposed and disposed to the sins that destroy character and embitter life. There are frequent repetitions, but these repetitions are helpful as emphasizing the main dangers to which the young are exposed. They are especially warned against four sins—impurity, intemperance, lying, and robbery. The warnings against impurity of life are the most frequent and solemn. With terrible vividness does he describe the subtlety of the temptation, the suddenness of the fall, the bitterness of the awakening, the inevitable and life-long remorse. The man who loses his virtue takes a viper into his heart. He will always hear the hissing and feel the sting. Next to this come the warnings against intemperance, against the wine whose ruddy color tempts the young, but whose use produces an excitement that proves injurious to body and soul. Solomon's advice to the young is total abstinence, from his standpoint of wise expediency, from the havoc he had seen strong drink produce among the youth of his day; and his advice represents the sober judgment of every

age. He speaks to the young as a class, whose power of body and mind are still in process of development, and to them he says, what every lover of the young must still say, "Let the wine-cup alone. Wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging." Next Solomon strongly advises the young against every form of lying, especially against slander. Veracity, we have been told, is the backbone of modern civilization. In the marts of the world a man's word must be as good as his bond; and it should be said that when you remember the immense sums of money which every day pass from hand to hand, in spite of occasional defalcations, modern commercial life is a grand exhibition of fidelity to trusts. But there may be deception when no promise is broken. Don't lie in word or act. Let there be truth on your lips and love in your heart. Finally, Solomon warns the young against robbery of every kind, whether it be the robbery of violence or the robbery of false weights and measures. Don't steal. Three feet to the yard; sixteen ounces to the pound; a fair equivalent in every bargain you make—that is Solomon's advice, and he was a great merchant as well as a king. This book is full of downright good common sense and is the best practical guide for young men to-day, in its warnings against impurity, intemperance, falsehood and theft. Five great, positive virtues are commended to the young man who cherishes an honorable ambition, and these are regard for parental advice, industry, economy, contentment and piety. The diligent man carves his way to recognition; he stands before kings. The sluggard is advised to learn of the ants, who lay by in store against the winter. Sluggishness and improvidence invite disaster. Laziness and wastefulness are the great enemies of prosperity. Work and save is the Solomonian motto. That may not insure wealth. But the king says, and Agur joins him in the advice, riches are a snare. And finally, the young are exhorted to cultivate an earnest piety, for wisdom is the glory of God and His counsellor from eternity. *Behrends.*

The references to this Book of Proverbs in the

New Testament are somewhat numerous, but in general are not designated as quotations. The sacred writers use the book as it was made to be used—that is, for the value of its maxims of wisdom. In one passage (Heb. 12 : 5) the words found (Prov. 3 : 11, 12) are referred to as an "exhortation which speaketh to you as unto children," and which, therefore, must have been recognized as their accredited teacher—*i.e.*, as being words "spoken" in their sacred books. The common form of reference to the proverb appears in Peter's words (1 Pet. 4 : 8), "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins," words taken from Prov. 10 : 12, "Love covereth all sins." So also Prov. 25 : 21, 22 appear in Rom. 12 : 20, and the sentiment of Prov. 17 : 13 about rewarding evil for good appears in similar words Rom. 12 : 17 and 1 Thess. 5 : 15. H. C.—This book is frequently quoted by the apostles, who considered it as a treasure of revealed morality from which Christians were to derive their rules of conduct; and the canonical authority of no part of the Old Testament is so ratified by the evidence of quotations as that of the Proverbs. But it is remarkable that the Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach, which has so striking an affinity to the Book of Proverbs, is not quoted in a single instance by the apostles and evangelists; and the difference between canonical and apocryphal is nowhere so strongly marked as in this example. *Michaelis.*

The Proverbs of Solomon are in three divisions :

Nine chapters (1-9), addressed chiefly to the young.

Fifteen chapters (10-24), more various, and addressed to all ages and ranks.

Five chapters (25-29), a later collection made by scribes under the orders of King Hezekiah from extant records of the wisdom of Solomon.

There are added two appendices. The words of Agur fill the thirtieth chapter. They are entitled his "prophecy," or rather burden, or weighty deliverance. Of this sage nothing whatever is known. The thirty-first chapter contains the words of Lemuel the king, probably an Arab prince. D. F.

CHAPTER I.

- 1 THE proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel :
- 2 To know wisdom and instruction ;
To discern the words of understanding ;
- 3 To receive instruction in wise dealing,
In righteousness and judgment and equity ;
- 4 To give subtilty to the simple,
To the young man knowledge and discretion :
- 5 That the wise man may hear, and increase in learning ;
And that the man of understanding may attain unto sound counsels :
- 6 To understand a proverb, and a figure ;
The words of the wise, and their dark sayings.
- 7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge :
But the foolish despise wisdom and instruction.
- 8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father,
And forsake not the teaching of thy mother :
- 9 For they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head,
And chains about thy neck.
- 10 My son, if sinners entice thee,
Consent thou not.
- 11 If they say, Come with us,
Let us lay wait for blood,
Let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause ;
- 12 Let us swallow them up alive as Sheol,
And whole, as those that go down into the pit ;
- 13 We shall find all precious substance,
We shall fill our houses with spoil ;
- 14 Thou shalt cast thy lot among us ;
We will all have one purse :
- 15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them ;
Refrain thy foot from their path :
- 16 For their feet run to evil,
And they make haste to shed blood.
- 17 For in vain is the net spread,
In the eyes of any bird :
- 18 And these lay wait for their own blood,
They lurk privily for their own lives.
- 19 So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain ;
It taketh away the life of the owners thereof.
- 20 Wisdom crieth aloud in the street ;
She uttereth her voice in the broad places ;
- 21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse ;
At the entering in of the gates,
In the city, she uttereth her words :
- 22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity ?
And scorners delight them in scorning,
And fools hate knowledge ?
- 23 Turn you at my reproof :
Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you,
I will make known my words unto you.
- 24 Because I have called, and ye refused ;
I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ;
- 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel,
And would none of my reproof :
- 26 I also will laugh in *the day* of your calamity ;
I will mock when your fear cometh ;
- 27 When your fear cometh as a storm,
And your calamity cometh on as a whirlwind ;
When distress and anguish come upon you.
- 28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ;
They shall seek me diligently, but they shall not find me :
- 29 For that they hated knowledge,
And did not choose the fear of the LORD :
- 30 They would none of my counsel ;
They despised all my reproof :
- 31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,
And be filled with their own devices.
- 32 For the backsliding of the simple shall slay them,
And the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.
- 33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell securely,
And shall be quiet without fear of evil.

1-6. WITH obvious fitness the author begins with a clear statement of his objects—viz., to help the reader to the knowledge of wisdom ; to impart useful instruction ; to give just ideas

of moral rectitude ; to settle grave questions of right and wrong. In v. 4 “subtilty” must not be taken in its bad sense of cunning, craftiness, but in the sense of sharp and clear discrimina-

tion and just apprehension—sagacity. The “simple” here, as usually in the writings of Solomon, are the open-hearted and unsuspecting, who are accessible to every social influence, and therefore easily seduced into evil ways. He proceeds to say that every wise man will hear good counsel and will make acquisitions of solid wisdom and of all useful knowledge, so as to understand proverbs and those brief and condensed maxims which require skill for their interpretation. The “dark sayings” of the wise are those deep, abstruse maxims which purposely task the ingenuity of the reader in order to fix their rich thought more deeply in his mind. H. C.

2. To know wisdom. The use of these proverbs is to give true moral and spiritual wisdom and instruction to those that carefully hear and read them. *Bishop H.*—This book will help us : 1. To form right notions of things, and to possess our minds with clear and distinct ideas of them ; that we may *know wisdom and instruction* ; that wisdom which is got by instruction, by Divine revelation ; may know both how to speak and act wisely ourselves, and to give instruction to others. 2. To distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil ; *to discern the words of understanding* ; to apprehend and judge of them, to guard against mistakes, and to accommodate what we are taught to ourselves and our own use. H.

4. The previous verses have described the ends aimed at. This points out the classes for which the book will be found useful. These are mainly two—the *simple*, literally the “open,” the open-hearted, the minds ready to receive impressions for good or evil, so exposed to the latter that the word for the most part is used as in v. 22, and elsewhere, with a shade of evil attaching to it ; and the *young*—those whose age places them for the most part under the category of the “open,” and who, even if their will be stronger, still need both knowledge and discipline. To these the teacher offers what they most need, the *subtlety*, which may turn to evil and become as the wisdom of the serpent, but which also takes its place among the highest moral gifts (Matt. 10 : 16) ; *knowledge* of good and evil, the *discretion* or discernment which sets a man on his guard and keeps him from being duped by false advisers. E. H. P.

To the young man knowledge. Youth is the time to form opinions—or, rather to learn truth. It is meant that you should now, with the honest use of all the power you can command, canvass and decide upon the Babel of varying beliefs around you. No man

has any belief but what he wins for himself as the captive of his own spear and his own bow. If we are building on traditional opinion we have really no foundation at all. Unless the word received from others has been verified by ourselves and changed into a part of our own being, we may befool ourselves with creeds and professions to which we fancy that we adhere, but we have no belief whatsoever. You must learn to look with your own eyes, and not through the spectacles of any human guides, authorities, or teachers upon the mystic, awful verities of this strange life, and upon the light that falls on them from the far-off empyrean above. A. M.

Knowledge and practice do mutually promote one another. Knowledge prepares and disposeth for practice, and practice is the best way to perfect knowledge in any kind. Mere speculation is a very raw and rude thing in comparison of that true and distinct knowledge which is gotten by practice and experience. Knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere speculation as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. Give me a man that constantly does a thing well, and that shall satisfy me that he knows how to do it. That saying of our blessed Saviour, “If any man will do My will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself,” is a clear determination of this matter—namely, that they understand the will of God best who are most careful to do it. And so likewise the best way to know what God is, is to transcribe His perfections in our lives and actions, to be holy, and just, and good, and merciful as He is. *Tillotson.*—The highest rational knowledge of God cannot profit without the knowledge of faith. This general and common knowledge of Christ is but a knowing after the flesh, not in the power of His Spirit, and can no more advantage than the Jews knowing Him, or Judas his living with Him, did them or him without believing. In the Scripture, Christians are not called knowing persons, but believers. *T. R. Stevenson.*—Not the truth which a man *knows*, but that which he feels and lives, becomes the soul’s life. Truth cannot bless, except when it is lived, proclaimed, and suffered for. *Anon.*

5. The wise man. A wise man is one who understands himself well enough to make due allowance for moods, never concluding that a thing is thus or thus because just now it bears that look ; waiting often to see what a sleep or a walk, or a cool revision, or perhaps a considerable turn of repentance will do. He does not

slash upon a subject or a man from the point of a just now rising temper. He maintains a noble candor by waiting sometimes for a gentler spirit and a better sense of truth. He is never intolerant of other men's judgments, because he is a little distrustful of his own. He restrains the dislikes of prejudice, because he has a prejudice against his dislikes. His resentments are softened by his condemnations of himself. His depressions do not crush him, because he has sometimes seen the sun, and believes it may appear again. He revises his opinions readily, because he has a right, he thinks, to better opinions if he can find them. He holds fast sound opinions, lest his moodiness in change should take all truth away. A man who is duly aware thus of his own distempered faculty makes a life how different from one who acts as if he were infallible, and had nothing to do but just to let himself be pronounced. *Bushnell.*

Will increase in learning. True wisdom is never stationary, but always progressive; because it secures the ground behind it as a basis for further advances. "He who is not adding is wasting; he who is not increasing knowledge is losing from it," says Rabbi Hillel. *Fausset.*—The true lover of learning gives not over his chase and pursuit for a little smattering knowledge he gets, but rather, having got the scent how sweet learning is, puts on with fuller cry for what he wants. The true doctor studies harder than the freshman, because as he knows more of learning, so by that knowledge he understands his own deficiency better; for the higher he ascends the hill of learning, the more his prospect enlargeth, while the other, standing at the bottom, thinks he knows all in his little. *Gurnall.*—All true knowledge is alluring. The first sight of a mystery is transporting, and also alluring to a further inquiry. "A wise man will hear and will increase learning;" he will arise to more sublime thoughts and discoveries. It is the nature of all true knowledge to sharpen the mind for more. The scholar that has a taste of any curious learning will not leave the pursuit till by turning over books and stretching his thoughts, he has increased his stock. It is also the nature of spiritual knowledge to put an edge upon the appetite, and open the understanding wider that it may be filled with more. *Charnock.*

7-9. Solomon, having undertaken to *teach a young man knowledge and discretion*, here lays down two general rules to be observed in order thereunto; and those are to fear God and honor his parents. II.

7. This verse belongs properly to the intro-

duction, giving very appropriately the state of mind in which wisdom should be sought. The "fear of the Lord" in the sense of Solomon is not a slavish dread, but a reverential and filial regard, in which love blends with profound homage, and a respect which, as related to God, rises to the highest reverence. In this spirit we desire above all things else to learn and to do all our Heavenly Father's will. The lessons of heavenly wisdom are therefore cherished with warmest affection and sought with most earnest endeavor. So vital is the fear of the Lord to the acquisition of all true wisdom that it may fitly be said to be the very *beginning* of it, the starting-point; the spirit without which there can be no truly honest and earnest pursuit of wisdom. H. C.—"The fear of the Lord" comes as the motto of the book. The beginning of wisdom is not found in keen insight, nor wide experience, nor the learning of the schools, but in the temper of reverence and awe. The fear of the finite in the presence of the Infinite, of the sinful in the presence of the Holy, self-abhorring, adoring, this for the Israelite was the starting-point of all true wisdom. In the Book of Job (28 : 28) it appears as an oracle, accompanied by the noblest poetry. In Psalms 111 : 10 it comes as the choral close of a temple hymn. Here it is the watchword of a true ethical education. The fear of which the three writers speak is not the slave's dread of punishment. It has no "torment," and is compatible with childlike love. But this and not love is the "*beginning* of wisdom." Through successive stages and by the discipline of life love blends with it and makes it perfect. E. H. P.

In the preface to the Decalogue we are taught to feel awe toward the Creator as the Lord our God, and also grateful love to Him as the One who brought us out of the house of bondage. These two feelings have justly been styled the centripetal and centrifugal forces of the moral universe. Neither can be spared. The concurrence of the two bring about that state of mind and heart which is most acceptable to God and most conducive to our present and future welfare. The text says that it is the head and front of knowledge. T. W. C.—The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, because knowledge, being the apprehension of facts and application of them to life, cannot properly begin, or be placed on a right foundation, without first apprehending and applying a fact which includes and which modifies all other facts whatever. The knowledge which is to train the soul must begin, continue, and end in the apprehension of God—of God as first, and of all

other things as He has made them to be to us exponents of and testimonies to Himself. And if knowledge is to be of any real use to help and renovate man, the affections must be wrought upon at the very outset of teaching. There is but one personal Agent whose influence and presence can abide through life, can alike excite hope, and fear, and love in the infant, in the child, in the youth, in the man, in the aged, and on the bed of death ; and that One is God Himself. Unless He be known first and known throughout, knowledge will abide alone in the head and will not find a way to the heart ; man will know but will not grow by it ; will know but will not act upon it ; will know for narrow and low and selfish purposes, but never for blessing to himself or to others, never for the great ends of his being and never for glory to his God. The fear of the Lord is not a barren fact, like the shape of the earth or the course of the seasons ; it is a living, springing, transmuting affection, capable of enduing even ordinary facts with power to cheer and to bless, and to bear fruit in men's hearts and lives. *Alford.*

Know thyself that thou mayest fear God ; know God that thou mayest love Him. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom ; the love of God is the fulfilling of the law. In all thy actions think God sees thee, and in all His actions labor to see Him ; that will make thee fear Him, this will move thee to love Him. The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, and the knowledge of God is the perfection of love. *Quarles.*—To know God, to contemplate the perfections of His nature and the wonders of His hand ; to become acquainted with that regular and orderly plan by which He governs His creatures ; to observe His watchful care and providential regard ; to behold the wonders of redemption, the character and undertaking of Jesus, the doctrine He hath taught, the duties He hath enforced, the promises He hath given ; to discover the means of salvation, the economy of the invisible world, and the continuance of our own existence in that immortality which is brought to light by the Gospel—these and other subjects of equal importance, when opened to the mind, not only give pleasure as speculative discoveries and the solutions of distressing doubts, but by kindling an ardent and elevated devotion, giving support and reasonableness to hope and influencing to the discharge of every religious and moral duty, produce also the testimony of a good conscience and the favor of God—the present possession of the peace of the Gospel, and the prospect of a

future fulness of joy in the presence of God forever. *R. Watson.*

8, 9. These verses exhibit the relation of the person addressed to his monitor, and make an earnest appeal to him readily to receive the proffered instruction. As an inducement it holds forth the beautiful ornaments of character which such a readiness will confer upon him.

8. *My son* is the usual address of a teacher to a learner, and is common in Persia and Arabia, as well as in Palestine. The writer assumes the attitude of a parent addressing his children. *M. S.*—In the eight opening chapters “my son” occurs no less than *fifteen times*. This circumstance makes the counsels more winning and more touching. *Bishop Alexander.*

He charges children both to receive and to retain the good lessons their parents give them. Some observe that whereas the Gentile ethics and the laws of the Persians and Romans provided only that children should pay respect to their *father*, the Divine law secures the honor of the *mother* also. *H.*—Our earthly relations are but a figure of our heavenly relations. The tenderness, the loving care, the joyful self-sacrifice of our earthly parents, are meant to assure us of and to aid us in believing in the exceeding great love of our heavenly Father toward us. *E. H. Bradby.*

By the forethought of the mother in the touching of this one's disposition and that one's disposition, first on this side and then on that, the wise administration of love in the household keeps everything moving harmoniously. There is an atmosphere thrown off from the mother's heart which keeps the whole household in order, and all progresses regularly and happily. *Anon.*—Children, look into those eyes, listen to that dear voice, notice the feeling of even a single touch that is bestowed upon you by that gentle hand ! Make much of it while you have that most precious of all gifts, a loving mother. Read the unfathomable love of those eyes, the deep anxiety of that tone and look, however slight your pain. In after life you may have friends, fond, dear, kind friends ; but never will you have again the inexpressible love and gentleness lavished upon you which none but a mother can bestow. *Macaulay.*—There is an enduring tenderness in the love of a mother to a son that transcends all other affections of the heart. It is neither to be chilled by selfishness, nor daunted by danger, nor weakened by worthlessness, nor stifled by ingratitude. She will sacrifice every comfort to his convenience ; she will surrender every pleasure to his enjoyment ; she will glory in his fame and exult in his pros-

perity ; and if misfortune overtake him, he will be the dearer to her from his misfortunes ; and if disgrace settle upon his name, she will still love and cherish him in spite of his disgrace ; and if all the world beside cast him off, she will be all the world to him. *Washington Irving.*

10-19. Here Solomon gives another general rule to young people, in order to their finding out and keeping in the paths of wisdom, and that is, to take heed of the snare of bad company. David's Psalms begin with this caution, and so do Solomon's Proverbs. How industrious wicked people are to seduce others into the paths of the destroyer ! Sinners love company in sin ; the angels that fell were tempters almost as soon as they were sinners. They do not threaten or argue, but entice with flattery and fair speech ; with a bait they draw the unwary young man to the hook. H. — Solomon admonishes the young to shun the temptations to robbery—the prevailing and besetting sin of freebooting life. The tempter approaches with the suggestion, Let us get up an expedition for murder and plunder ; let us advance stealthily and fall suddenly upon some rich village or household ; let us swallow them up as the grave does, in a moment, remorselessly ; so shall we get stores of wealth without labor, and fill our houses with plunder. Thus, on the one side, are the temptations of gain without work or cost ; the social attractions of the secret fraternity and the love of bold adventure ; the sense of power also, and the charm of witnessing the surprise and panic of the defenceless ; but, on the other hand, Solomon admonishes his young friends that those feet run to evil and hasten to the shedding of blood (v. 16) ; that their movements may be anticipated and balked by the wariness of those whom they would fain surprise and destroy (v. 17) ; that their onset may recoil, and so their lying in wait will be for their own, not others' blood, and their "lurking privily" will cost, not others' lives, but their own. He then draws the broad conclusion—So it befalls every man who is greedy of gain, for such greed costs the life of those who thus grasp at it. This conclusion justifies the remark that this form of sin may represent numerous other forms, any and every other form indeed in which the social element is strong and human selfishness riots recklessly upon other men's interests and rights. Such bold, extreme wickedness reacts with fearful power. H. C.

10. From broad general counsels the teacher passes to more specific warnings. The first great danger which besets the simple and the young is that of evil companionship. The only safety

is to be found in the power of saying "No" to all such invitations, however enticing they may be. E. H. P. — Unless we have learned to say "No," we shall be miserable as well as weak. There is no real felicity for the men who have not learned to stand alone, if need be, and when those round them are all going in one direction to say : "I have neither part nor lot in the matter." We must resist if we are to obey. It is easy, but not blessed, to go with the stream, to be borne by circumstances, to share in the popular way of life. It is better to swim up stream, though much harder, than to let ourselves be lazily borne down it. Young men, if you want to be blessed, learn in time "When sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Unless your obedience is militant, it will be no obedience at all. A. M. — It matters not to the cattle of the field what company they keep in grazing the meadow for a few short years ; but it matters much to thee what associates are permitted to affect thy character for time and for eternity. Respect thyself, and so fear God that thou canst have no companions who do not also fear Him. D. F.

11. Come with us. You know how many there are that say to you, sometimes by articulate words, and still more frequently by example, "Come with us. Let's have our fling. Time enough to be better when we get old. No harm in sowing our wild oats now. If a young man comes into the city and takes his place at desk or counter, and there forgets resistance, sturdy non-compliance and heroic daring to be singular when evil tempts him, he is ruined body and soul. That is not exaggeration, as anybody who watches for a few years has sorrowful reason to know. I have seen many young men from the day that they entered their situations, fresh and buoyant, "innocent of much transgression," and "simple concerning evil." And I have watched them grow hard and reserved, gradually withdraw themselves from good and Christian influences, exchange their simplicity for knowledge which was bitter, sometimes become pale and haggard and old before their time—and then they have disappeared. "Where is he gone ?" "Oh, he got into a bad set ; he has lost his situation, and is gone abroad." And sometimes the answer is : "He went home ill, and he is dead." The lesson that is read you by these sad careers cut so short is surely that one—"Resist." "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." A. M. — The *defence* prescribed is, "Consent thou not." It is a blunt, peremptory command. Your method of defence must be different from

the adversary's mode of attack. His strength lies in making gradual approaches, yours in a resistance sudden, resolute, total. *Arnot.*

17, 18. They are worse than the birds, and have not the sense which we sometimes perceive them to have ; for the fowler knows it is in vain to lay his snare *in the sight of the bird*, and therefore he has arts to conceal it. But the sinner sees ruin at the end of his way ; the murderer, the thief, see the jail and the gallows before them—nay, their watchmen tell them they shall surely die, but it is to no purpose. H.

19. Greedy of gain. *The love of money is a root of all evil.* While many other sources of sin exist, there is no *description* of crime which this vice has not prompted men to commit. On no subject, perhaps, are the Scriptures more copious and minute than on the sin of covetousness. If a faithful portrait of its loathsome character can induce us to hate it ; if a sight of the virtues which it has extinguished, the vices with which it is often associated, and the depraved characters in whom it has most flourished ; if the tenderest dissuasives from it, and the terrors of the Lord warning us against it ; if Sinai and Calvary uniting and protesting against it—if all this combined can deter us from the sin of covetousness, then the Scriptures have omitted nothing which could save us from its guilty contamination. J. H.

20, 21. *Wisdom crieth aloud to all men.* The allurements to evil in the world and the consequences of yielding to tempters, referred to in the preceding verses, naturally suggest the call and the attractions of a heavenly character. In this fine personification, so often and effectively employed throughout the Book of Proverbs, wisdom represents, primarily, supreme excellence—that is, piety or godlikeness of heart and life ; and is opposed to folly, which stands for the extreme of impiety. But as Christ is the only manifest embodiment of this exalted idea of wisdom, as His spirit perfectly harmonizes with this personified messenger of God to men, and his office-work both in word and deed corresponds exactly with that indicated in this Divine message, so it is a natural and necessary conclusion that Christ Himself is represented here. And the New Testament by specific statements amply confirms this conclusion. Bearing in mind this reference to Christ in the personified wisdom of the proverbs, and noticing the interchangeable use of the abstract idea of piety or religion with the personal Christ, observe, first, the openness and universality of this call to men. It is not uttered in secret, as if the speaker were ashamed of the message, or as if

the invitation were restricted to few. But openly traversing every pathway of man, and persistently seeking out all classes, this herald of heaven is represented as crying aloud to the multitudes gathered in the gateways and other places of concourse, and to those abiding in their homes. B.—How much of Christ the writer of Proverbs descried we know not ; but the inspiring Spirit so guided him that he set forth an ideal of wisdom which cannot be satisfied short of the doctrine of Christ—the personal Word, in whom “are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” and whose Gospel of grace and truth, wherever received and obeyed, causes this saying to be fulfilled in His disciples.—“Wisdom is justified of her children.” D. F.

22. How long will ye ? In the vicious ways of the world it mercifully falleth out that it taketh some time and pains to undo ourselves. We fall not from virtue in a day. Bad dispositions require some time to grow into bad habits, bad habits must undermine good, and often-repeated acts make us habitually evil ; so that by gradual deprivations, and while we are but staggeringly evil, we are not left without parentheses of consideration, thoughtful rebukes, and merciful interventions, to recall us unto ourselves. For the wisdom of God hath methodized the course of things unto the best advantage of goodness. *Browne.*

22, 23. *Three classes addressed, with expostulation, entreaty, and promise.* The *simple* are those untaught and inexperienced who, because of natural infirmity and self-pleasing, are easily ensnared and led into evil by worldly tempters and enticements. But experience in transgression transforms the *simple* into the *scorner*. This is a lower grade and more fixed condition in sin. It makes the man a despiser of truth, a scoffer at God and religion. In the third class scorning has deepened into hate of the truth and of God, and to hardened viciousness. *Fools* here mean men that openly defy God, and are self-abandoned to their lusts. In the first Psalm you will find the same three distinct classes. The same gradation of character is there further indicated by the several attitudes of walking, standing, and sitting ; thus intimating the more and more fixed condition of the maturing sinner. First comes *expostulation* with each class, based upon the increasing brevity of time and difficulty of changing the course of life. When life is so short and uncertain, and the work of return is daily more difficult, *how long* will ye delay decisive action ? *Turn you now*, and heed my reproof ! The meaning is, Repent ye and become wise, docile, trustful. And, as every-

where in the Old Testament, so here we have mercy coupling promise with entreaty. The promise, too, is the same which we find alike in Old Testament and New—the *promise of the Spirit and the Word of God*. This Divine agent and instrument, by which the simple, the scorner, and the defiantly impious alike are enabled to turn again unto God, is here pledged to “whomsoever will.” B.—The words are specially pertinent considered as coming from the lips of our Divine Lord, “Behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto [upon] you; I will make known My words unto you.” In the fulness of His love He promises to give not only good counsel, but (what is far more) the good influence of His own Spirit to impress His truth on human hearts and so change them from sin to holiness. H. C.

24-31. *Consequences of persistent refusal set forth with awful vividness.* “I have called,” says Christ, “have stretched forth My hands,” as one earnestly entreating; but ye have refused, despised, rejected My counsels, entreaties, and promised mercies! There remains only warning, and this is uttered in terms that ought to stir thought in the most heedless, and awaken fear in the most hardened. “I, even I, who have dealt with you so forbearingly and kindly, who have besought you so tenderly, and warned you so pityingly and faithfully, even I shall deal with you as with enemies. As ye have laughed and mocked at truth and purity, at My character and commands, derided and despised My promises and warnings, so will I mock and have you in derision when your fear cometh as a destructive tempest and your calamity advances as a sweeping whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you.” And, to intensify this fearful declaration, He foretells them of the change which shall then be wrought in their convictions and actions. They shall *believe* in Me then, and *call earnestly* upon Me. But I will not answer, and they shall not find Me, however intense their desire and seeking. A pause seems to follow these vivid words of prophetic warning. But those that are warned pass on unheeding out of reach of the kindly voice. Then speaks again the pitying Divine messenger of their hopeless estate (vs. 29-31). Because of this persistence in their own evil way in despite of such plain warning, they shall reap as they have sown; misery for sin, remorse and despair for impenitence and hardness of heart. This is the terrible significance of *eating and being surfeited with the fruit of their own devices and doings*. And this passage, like its New Testament parallel (Gal. 6 : 7, 8), clearly shows that punish-

ment is directly the result of man’s own consciously responsible acting, a fact which gives it the sharpest sting. B.

Here, in words of terrible truthfulness and figures of appalling force, we have the idea of *retribution*. The repetition and the accumulation of strong figures heightens the force of the passage. The words before us seem to exhaust their meaning in the awfully solemn assurance that God will never swerve from His course of righteous retribution, but will make the reckless sinner’s doom inexorable and eternal. H. C.—The person represented as speaking these very solemn and terrible words is that same Wisdom which is represented in the verses before the text as making most gracious offers to all who will hear her voice. The love of Christ only measures the wrath of God against those who neglect it. As the blood of Christ saves, so the blood of Christ condemns. *Bishop H. Goodwin.*

God is long-suffering and of great pity. He gives a thousand chances. He calls and calls again. He reproves gently. He rebukes sternly. He chastens tenderly. He smites severely. Every sinful career is marked by such gradations of discipline. At last the cup is full. Long trifled with, “God is not mocked;” and he who would not have Him for his Father must at last know Him as his Judge. C. J. V.—Mercy, with her weeping eyes (for she hath wept for sinners), when she finds they will not repent, looks more terribly stern in her loveliness than Justice in all his majesty; she drops the white flag from her hand, and saith, “No; I called, and they refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; let them die, let them die;” and that terrible word from the lip of Mercy’s self is harsher thunder than the very damnation of Justice. Oh, yes, the goodness of God demands that men should perish if they will sin. *Spurgeon.*

26. *Even I* is emphatic—I, who have warned you so often, so tenderly, and so earnestly—even I shall henceforth treat you as enemies, who deserve contempt. *Laughing at* and *mocking* are expressions of the highest and most contemptuous indignation. Compare Psalms 2 : 5, where, as applicable to God, this same bold language is employed. M. S.—If God is infinitely good and holy, and if He knows the full misery that sin has brought into His creation, with what other sentiment can He regard sin but with that of hatred and indignation? God must look upon sin with displeasure, and He must *act* upon that displeasure. Evil must ex-

cite displeasure in one that is perfectly good ; and in the moral Governor of the universe such displeasure cannot be quiescent and impotent, it must be active and effective. Reason teaches us so, and revelation sanctions, enlarges, and enforces the lesson. A. C. H.

Guilt is not misfortune ; it is not imbecility ; it is not disease ; it is not want of moral balance ; it is not inherited depravity—it is *guilt*, pure and simple. Any trial consistent with a man's moral freedom, so far as we know, is a fair trial. If a man has more than that it is more than justice, it is grace. Up to the full extent of conscious wrong a man is damnable. The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die. This is justice. It is not justice with a reservation ; it is *justice* full and absolute. Being just, it is Divine and glorious. Yet this is the retributive idea in God's government. If it is not right, nothing is right. If it is not a fit theme of exulting song, the universe does not contain such in all its history. Under a moral government if guilt cannot be quelled by means of moral suasion and its equivalents nothing can reach it but retribution. Man's own will has the decision in itself. If he will not be saved, he cannot be. Nothing is left but retributive devices. And of these the chief and most appalling is to leave guilt to itself. Give it a place where it may be let alone, to act out its own wretched nature, and leave it there. But guilt left to itself is hell. Milton's Satan felt the ghastly reality—"Myself am hell !" This is the second death. A. P.

27. When fear cometh, . . . when distress and anguish come. No man knows how soon God may let loose the tormenting power of sin upon his conscience ; how soon He may set fire to all that fuel that lies dormant and treasured up in his sinful breast. Upon which account the present quiet of his condition is so far from ministering any just cause of satisfaction to him, that he has reason to beg upon his knees that God would alter the method of His proceeding, and rather compound and strike him with some present horror for sin than sink him under the unsupportable weight of an eternal damnation. *South.*

30. Despised my reproof. Men do not in terms deny God's existence, but make light of Him ; never read His Word with any seriousness ; never pray unless they are ill or afraid ; count church service and instruction a weariness. Allah has far more reverence from the Moslem than the great God of heaven and earth obtains from multitudes who pass as Christians. They live as if He had no right to command

them, and no power to judge them. They lift their own will and pleasure to the throne, and despise the Lord of hosts. D. F.—Back of this rejection lies an intense devotion to present indulgences ; a latent and incorrect conviction that the love and service of Christ bereave the present of much that is of solid worth ; the determined suppression of serious thought ; a haughtiness of intellectual conceit that is ever the patron of error ; the studied cultivation of stoicism and insensibility to the Gospel, and soul restiveness under moral restraints. *Leech.*

31. The fruit of their own way. The Bible meaning of a curse is simply the natural consequence of men's own ill actions. For even in this life the door of mercy may be shut, and we may cry in vain for mercy when it is the time for justice. This is not merely a doctrine ; it is a common, patent fact. Men do wrong and escape again and again the just punishment of their deeds ; but how often there are cases in which a man does not escape, when he is filled with the fruit of his own devices, and left to the misery which he has earned. Terrible and heart-searching for the wrong-doer is the message, God does not curse thee ; thou hast cursed thyself. God will not go out of His way to punish thee ; thou hast gone out of His way, and thereby thou art punishing thyself. God does not break His laws to punish sins. The laws themselves punish ; every fresh wrong deed, and wrong thought, and wrong desire of thine sets thee more and more out of tune with those immutable and eternal laws of the moral universe which have their root in the absolute and necessary character of God Himself. The wheels move on, but the workman who should have worked with them is entangled among them. He is out of his place, and slowly, but irresistibly, they are grinding him to powder. *Kingsley.*

Filled with their own devices. Suppose a man with his memory of all his past life perfect, and his conscience stimulated to greater sensitiveness and clearer judgment, and all opportunities ended of gratifying tastes and appetites whose food is in this world, while yet the soul has become dependent on them for ease and comfort. What more is needed to make a hell ? And the supposition is but the statement of a fact. We seem to forget much, but when the waters are drained off all the lost things will be found at the bottom. Conscience dulled and sophisticated here. But the icy cold of death will wake it up, and the new position will give new insight into the true character of our actions. There is nothing improbable in sup-

posing that inclinations and tastes which have been nourished for a lifetime may survive the possibility of indulging them in another life, as they often do in this ; and what can be worse than such a thirst for one drop of water, which never can be tasted more. These things are certain, and no more is needed to make sin produce, by necessary consequences, misery and ruin ; while similarly, goodness brings joy, peace, and blessing. A. M.

Is it not an ever-terrible truth that men are building up their destiny by the actions and habits of their lives ? “ Sow an act, reap a habit ; sow a habit, reap a character ; sow a character, reap a destiny.” The righteous become righteous, the godly become godly ; so slowly but surely may the power of being masters of our fate pass out of our hands. B. Carpenter.—By many a small sin, by innumerable minute tamperings with conscience, by a thousand insignificant sacrifices of principle to passion, of duty to inclination, by multiplicity of little fits of anger and unnoted acts of sensual indulgence—it has been by a long series and succession of such experiences as these that many a man’s moral being has been fashioned into the shape it wears. To the call of duty, the voice of religion, the first announcement of the solemn truths of death and judgment and retribution, the mind even in its natural and unrenewed state can never be altogether insensible ; but, if unregarded, the impression soon fades, and the solemn sounds grow fainter and fainter to the ear. By every act of disobedience to its dictates we sin away something of the sensitiveness of conscience ; and it is quite possible for the process of disobedience to go on until even from the grossest sins all the first recoil of dislike is gone, and to the voice of warning and instruction there rises not the faintest echo of compunction in the soul. No matter how rapid its fatal descent, no warning voice can retard it now ; no matter how terrible the ruin before it, no danger can startle it now. “ The light that was in it” has become “ darkness, and how great is that darkness !” Caird.

32. In this profoundly instructive and warning passage it is the backsliding, the mere turning away of the soul from invitations, admonitions, opportunities of salvation that shall accomplish the destruction otherwise *not* accomplished, and shall be the very heart and seal of desolation to the lost soul, otherwise saved. Every gracious opportunity is God’s merciful call, every day of time, and of light from the cross, is a new emphatic gesture of God’s outstretched hand ; and when all these oft-repeated

and compassionate efforts of Divine love disregarded come up for review, with the cost at which every one of them was exercised, and the manner in which they were all treated, then will the sight and sense of these things alone, were there nothing else of judgment, be a calamity like a whirlwind (v. 27), taking away the soul. G. B. C.

Men tell us that if future punishment be provided it will be disciplinary, corrective, and refining, and hence limited in its continuance. But the Scriptures map no such path from perdition to the skies. No inspired ray falls along any such conjectural route from hell to heaven. Apostate angels have been in exile from God for ages, and to them the bottomless pit has not proven a school of virtue or a place to acquire holy habits. Meetness for heaven is secured by the “ renewing of the Holy Ghost,” and not by personal expiation for sin. The redeemed in heaven ascribe their redemption to the blood of Jesus, and not to the efficacy of limited penal misery. Inspiration never suggests that the means of salvation, rejected in probation, are afforded to the tenants of the world of woe. The Scriptures portray future punishment as destructive and perpetual, but never hint that it is corrective and limited.

Leech

33. Lastly comes, to crown all, the *promises* of reward to the obedient. The second clause explains the first. *Dwelling in confidence* means that he will have no reason to apprehend evil, and therefore will not anticipate it. M. S.—He shall not only be safe from evil, but *quiet from the fear of it*. *Though the earth be removed, yet shall not they fear*. Would we be safe from evil and quiet from the fear of it ? Let religion always rule us and the Word of God be our counsellor. That is the way to *dwell safely* in this world, and to *be quiet from the fear of evil* in the other world. H.

32, 33. *The effects of simple unheeding and heeding the voice of wisdom.* The mere silent, even respectful *turning away* from the proffered counsel and call of God shall ultimately lead to the ruin of the as yet unhardened soul ; while the *slothful quietude* (of “ prosperity”), the *mere inaction* of those advanced in sin, shall insure their destruction. But, on the other hand, we read a crowning promise to every one that simply, frankly, and trustingly heedeth. Safely, confidently such an one shall dwell ; tranquilly, without a fear of evil, he shall abide. What more can be asked in this world than to *be safe* from *real* evil, and *quiet* from *fear* of it ? Yet this is the clear, sure, Divine assurance to every

one that heeds Christ's call, that accepts His promise and His rule ! Only in fuller, richer, and more exquisitely tender form is this gladdening assurance repeated and confirmed by the incomparable utterance of Revelation : *Behold, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me !*

Two suggested thoughts may be usefully added :

1. The same essential truths are found in every part of the Bible. Here, in the Proverbs, we have the New Testament Gospel ; the same

merciful invitation, promise, and warning ; the same probation, closing with a final retributive award. A fitting parallel we find in 2 Cor. 6 : 1, 2. 2. So also we read, in the characters and courses of action delineated in the far time of Solomon, an identical picture of worldly life to day. And although the hundred generations since have each passed through a like experience, the strange fact is still to be noted that inexperienced youth will still credit every tempter's voice rather than believe and act wisely upon the counsel of those who have had experience of temptation and a gracious Divine deliverance. B

CHAPTER II.

1 MY son, if thou wilt receive my words,
And lay up my commandments with thee ;
2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom,
And apply thine heart to understanding ;
3 Yea, if thou cry after discernment,
And lift up thy voice for understanding ;
4 If thou seek her as silver,
And search for her as for hid treasures ;
5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the
LORD,
And find the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD giveth wisdom ;
Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and
understanding :
7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the upright,
He is a shield to them that walk in integrity ;
8 That he may guard the paths of judgment,
And preserve the way of his saints.
9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness
and judgment,
And equity, *yea*, every good path.
10 For wisdom shall enter into thine heart,
And knowledge shall be pleasant unto thy
soul ;
11 Discretion shall watch over thee,
Understanding shall keep thee :

12 To deliver thee from the way of evil,
From the men that speak froward things ;
13 Who forsake the paths of uprightness,
To walk in the ways of darkness ;
14 Who rejoice to do evil,
And delight in the frowardness of evil ;
15 Who are crooked in their ways,
And perverse in their paths :
16 To deliver thee from the strange woman,
Even from the stranger which flattereth with
her words ;
17 Which forsaketh the friend of her youth,
And forgetteth the covenant of her God :
18 For her house inclineth unto death,
And her paths unto the dead :
19 None that go unto her return again,
Neither do they attain unto the paths of
life :
20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good
men,
And keep the paths of the righteous.
21 For the upright shall dwell in the land,
And the perfect shall remain in it.
22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the land,
And they that deal treacherously shall be
rooted out of it.

1. To *receive* is the first thing in a sincere disciple. To *lay up* or *carefully keep* shows the value put upon the instruction. M. S.

3. Earthly wisdom is gained by study ; heavenly wisdom by prayer. Study may form a biblical scholar ; prayer puts the heart under a heavenly pupilage, and therefore forms the wise and spiritual Christian. But prayer must

not stand in the stead of diligence. Let it rather give life and energy to it. *Bridges*.—This is the secret of life—to believe that God is your Father, schooling and training you from your cradle to your grave ; and then to please Him and obey Him in all things, lifting up daily your hands and thankful heart, entreating Him to purge the eyes of your soul and give you the

true wisdom, which is to see all things as they really are and as God Himself sees them. If you do that, you may believe that God will teach you more and more how to do, in all the affairs of life, that which is right in His sight, and, therefore, good for you. *Kingsley.*

4. *Search us for hidden treasure.* Observe the expression ; you know jewels do not lie upon the surface of the ground, but they are hid in the receptacles of the earth, you must dig for them before you can enjoy them. Now you must search for the truth of God as for hid treasure. *Anon.*—Texts from the inexhaustible mine of truth remind us of those singular formations which often occur in rocks, called *drusic cavities*. You pick up a rough, ordinary-looking stone of somewhat round shape ; there is nothing specially attractive or interesting about it. You split it open with a hammer, and what a marvellous sight is displayed ! The commonplace boulder is a hollow sphere, lined with the most beautiful crystals, amethysts purple with a dawn that never was on land or sea. *Macmillan.*

Wisdom is spoken of as a thing that must be labored for ; the search is to be the very business of man's life ; there is no point more clearly laid down, none more insisted on than the necessity of exertion in the pursuit of wisdom. There are lessons enough in the Book of God for every day of the longest life. *Bishop Goodwin.*—The general character of Holy Scripture evinces the necessity of thought and meditation, if we would use it aright ; and also shows that such right use of it *must involve effort and exertion.* E. M. G.

Of all books in the world, the Bible is one which will not yield up its riches and its sweetness except to the diligent and faithful and earnest student. All great works demand long and patient and persevering study. The lesser mind cannot expect to grasp at once the purpose of the greater. *Perowne.*—Let no man, upon a weak conceit of sobriety or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain that a man can search too far, or be too well studied in the book of God's Word, or in the book of God's works ; divinity or philosophy ; but rather let men endeavor an endless progress or proficiencie in both ; only let men beware that they apply both to charity, and not to swelling ; to use and not to ostentation ; and again, that they do not unwisely mingle or confound these learnings together. *Bacon.*

I am not half so much afraid that intellectual doubts and the formulated, conscious disbelief of this generation will affect Christian people,

as I am afraid of the unconscious drift sweeping them away before they know. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has a solemn figure in regard of this matter. He says : " Let us take the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should drift past them." And that is exactly what befalls Christian men and women who do not continually renew their familiarity with God's Word and the Gospel to which they trust. Before they know where they are, the silent-flowing, swift stream has swept them down, and the truths to which they fancied they were anchored are almost invisible on the far horizon. For one man who loses his Christianity by yielding to the arguments of the other side there are ten who lose it by evaporation. " As Thy servant was busy here and there," was the lame excuse of the man in the Old Testament for letting his prisoner run away, " he was gone !" And God knows how he has gone and where he went. A. M.

1-5. If thou receive . . . cry after . . . seek . . . search for. If God has given men such evidence that a fair, and full, and perfectly candid examination is all that is needed to necessitate belief, then, if men do not believe, it will be in this very law that we shall find the ground of their condemnation. The difficulty will not lie in their mental constitution as related to evidence, nor in the want of evidence, but in that moral condition, that state of the heart, or the will, which prevented a proper examination. " There seems," says Butler, " no possible reason to be given why we may not be in a state of moral probation with regard to the exercise of our understanding upon the subject of religion, as we are with regard to our behavior in common affairs. The former is a thing as much within our power and choice as the latter." M. H.—Human consciousness, the judgment of mankind, and God, in all we know of Him, hold man responsible for his belief. Every man has within him an indestructible conviction of possessing a power over his opinions, and a sense of responsibility in reference to his beliefs. All men avow a readiness to change their opinions whenever they are furnished with a sufficient reason for so doing, and this avowal clearly implies the conviction on their part of a power in them to do so. As a matter of fact, all men are very sensitive about the light in which their opinions are regarded by others. They are ever ready to show dissatisfaction when charged with holding unworthy and erroneous opinions, and are prone to resent all such charges. And why, if men are not

conscious of possessing a power over their beliefs? *Cooper*.

5. *The fear of Jehovah* is the usual Hebrew designation of *true piety*; not *fear* in the sense of *terror*, but in that of *reverence*. *The fear of Jehovah* is a *treasure* (Is. 33 : 6); it is also a refuge in times of danger and trouble (Prov. 14 : 26; compare also Psalms 19 : 10; 115 : 11). All true wisdom leads to a knowledge of God. M. S.—No seeking for other forms of good is sure of being successful, but such seeking for heavenly wisdom—the greatest and best good men ever can seek—never yet failed to bring the good sought, and never can. So seeking “thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” H. C.

There is one department of knowledge which, like an ample palace, contains within itself mansions for every other knowledge; which deepens and extends the interest of every other, gives it new charms and additional purpose—the study of which, rightly and liberally pursued, is beyond any other entertaining, beyond all others tends at once to tranquillize and enliven, to keep the mind elevated and steadfast, the heart humble and tender; it is *biblical theology*, the philosophy of religion, and the religion of philosophy. *Shedd*.—All saving knowledge, including a practice answerable to that knowledge, a uniform, persevering obedience to the commands of God, is founded in humble and devout reverence toward God, in the tender fear of displeasing Him, and the readiness to receive, embrace, and lay up in an honest heart His Word and His grace whenever it shall be revealed and afforded to us. *Hammond*.—“The fear of the Lord” is almost everywhere in Scripture put for the whole duty of man, for godliness in general; and the reason is that the true fear of God always qualifies and tempers the mind so that a man dares not do otherwise than please and obey God to the utmost of his knowledge and power. *Bishop Beveridge*.

Wisdom is the knowledge of Divine things, not as mere objects of thought or of theoretical knowledge, but through an inward perception, in which the heart goes along with the reason, making the knowledge at once spiritual and practical. This is always presented in the Scriptures as wisdom in its highest form. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” is one of the most frequent proverbs of the Old Testament. And we read, “the fear of the Lord is the *instruction* of wisdom”—*i.e.*, devout obedience to God conducts the soul to the highest wisdom; the obedience of the heart disciplines the mind in heavenly knowledge, upon

the principle stated by Christ: “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” In the New Testament this same wisdom is set forth as the completest form of knowledge. J. P. T.

6. The ground of the preceding assurance is here given. The connection is thus: “Wonder not at the promises made, *for* Jehovah gives wisdom, and from His mouth cometh knowledge.” *What His mouth utters*—*viz.*, His words, are the sources of all true wisdom. M. S.—God desires nothing so much as that His intelligent and moral creatures should ask and receive, and so become His trustful, dutiful, and grateful children. Therefore if any man consciously lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not, and *it shall be given him*. Following the course of thought in our text, we shall see that this must be true of wisdom in the sense of this passage—*viz.*, true piety, “the fear of the Lord.” Knowing God, as thought of here, is that practical and experimental knowledge by which a lost sinner returns penitently from his wanderings and waywardness; finds God ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy, and comes to know Him as an object of love and trust. H. C.—We praise the truth, but forget that “the truth without the search for truth is only half the truth.” It is not truth in the abstract which is mighty, but the personality which is an embodiment of the truth. Not in professed belief but in real believers is the power of the Church. He who is *the* truth is also the way and the life. *Stuckenberg*.

7-9. The righteous, who seek and find wisdom in the sense of piety toward God and uprightness toward man, are saved of God, shielded from the moral perils of this sinning world, for God is their buckler; He keeps their upright paths under His guardian care and (v. 9) gives them understanding in all righteous and good ways. To walk uprightly is of course to walk securely. H. C.—If we depend upon God and seek to Him for wisdom, He will uphold us in our integrity, will enable us to *keep the paths of judgment*, however we may be tempted to turn aside out of them; for He *preserves the way of His saints*, that it be not perverted, and so preserves them in it safe and blameless to His heavenly kingdom. The assurances God has given us of His grace, if duly improved, will excite and quicken our endeavors in doing our duty. *Work out your salvation, for God works in you*. H.

9. *Path* or *track* here signifies manner of life, pursuit, and so the meaning is, “Every pursuit

in which good may be found." M. S.—The essence of Christian conduct is to rise beyond the schoolmastership of rules and commandments into the eager fulfilment of principles and precepts where duty is swallowed up in an understanding choice and all-embracing love. *Cable*.—Set ever before you, even in temporal matters, the grand spiritual object, and you will be led onward and upward, your course will be a progress and its goal success. Our Lord does not sever the sacred from the secular, but bids us sanctify the secular until that which is secondary and subordinate is wholly dominated by that which is spiritual. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." But he bids us subordinate every desire to the one aim of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. *T. F. Fotheringham*.

We must first, last, and always make our study of the Bible a search for absolute truth back of all assertion; for absolute right back of all will and authority; for absolute duty back of all exigency or commandment, and of supreme, spontaneous goodness back of and above all question of duty. Our Bible study should not always be a short search; but always it should be a search for the shortest, simplest way to our best possible understanding and practical acceptance of these things. Not be strong in the Bible, but "be strong in the Lord." *Cable*.—The safe man is who walks in the path of duty, the strong man is he who clothes himself with the strength of principle. The grandest characters have an affinity for right and truth. They succeed because they depend upon something stronger than any mere device of the intellect or any expedient suggested by the exigencies of a moment. They may suffer temporary defeat, but they follow the guiding light of principle with a faith which is wisdom. There is always more or less sophistry in temptations to self-indulgence, and the brighter the intellect the more ingeniously will it plead the cause of error. What we call the faculty of judgment is at its best simply a clear vision of the eternal veracities which persist through all history and finally crush all opposition because they are fundamental and fixed necessities. *Anon*.

10. Wisdom shall enter into thine heart. Truth itself, God's pure, eternal truth, simply discovered, observed, and emotionally revered, is but treasure still buried. "The kingdom of God cometh not by (mere admiring) observation"—of it. Only as truth melts into our hearts, our lives, our daily conduct, and is

there moulded and coined into justice, righteousness, holiness, and universal love, do its latent powers become actual values. *Cable*.—Only what is really believed is truly faith. Scripture cannot contain the faith of the believer, no more than the Church contains it; but Scripture is the source and nourishment of his faith; what is figuratively called objective faith is to be made literal subjective faith. The Christian consciousness is to grow by the appropriation of Scripture truth. One can believe the Bible only so far as he has personally appropriated the Bible. There is truth above us which is our master; there is a law over us which we are to obey; but that truth and that law are also to be in us, so that they become our truth and our law. Christian truth and Christian faith exist only for him to whom they have become a personal possession and a living power. *Stuckenberg*.

Knowledge shall be pleasant. The man who walks with God cannot possibly be a man of contracted, paltry views; there is that in Divine truth, there is that in the spirit and habit of devotion, there is that in intercourse with God which must expand the mind. The man of religion can enjoy every other form of truth and knowledge in common with the man of the world: he can traverse the pages of history, he can enter into all the sciences and philosophy, he can appreciate the productions of the poet, he can (like other men) transact the common, commercial business of life, he can comprehend with others the principles of political economy and legislative jurisprudence, he can go in intellectual attainment all the lengths of the men of this world, and when he comes to the termination of all that earth can teach and earth can give, God opens the treasures of religion and the boundless prospect of an eternal life. E. M.—No pleasure is comparable to standing upon the vantage ground of truth—a hill not to be commanded, and where the air is always clear and serene—to see the errors and wanderings and mists and tempests in the vale below, so always that this prospect be with pity and not with swelling or pride. *Bacon*.

It should not surprise us when men of acute and powerful understandings more or less reject the Gospel, for this reason that the Christian revelation addresses itself to our hearts, to our love of truth and goodness, our fear of sinning, and our desire to gain God's favor; and quickness, sagacity, depth of thought, strength of mind, power of comprehension, perception of the beautiful, power of language, and the like, though they are excellent gifts, are clearly quite

of a different kind from these excellencies—a man may have the one without having the other. Powers of mind and religious principles and feelings are distinct gifts ; and as all the highest spiritual excellence, humility, firmness, patience, would never enable a man to read an unknown tongue, or to enter into the depths of science, so all the most brilliant mental endowments, wit, or imagination, or penetration, or depth will never of themselves make us wise in religion. *Newman*.—We can reach out after the highest activities, aims, and attainments only by devoting our lives to securing redemption and giving redemption to men. With this as our dominant idea reform moves on, progress hastens, true culture advances apace, and wealth, position, culture, which when made the ends of life bring us only wreck and wretchedness, become the sanctified means for the attainment of grander ends in the larger manhood and the Divine glory. Seeking to have in us this mind that was in Christ Jesus we find Christ-likeness, and with it but without the seeking find true perfection and blessedness—we reach a life that is Christ-crowned, because Christ originated and governed by the true Christian philosophy, which is the only *natural* philosophy of the moral universe. D. S. G.

11. Discretion. There are many more shining qualities in the mind of man, but none so useful as discretion. This, indeed, gives value to all the rest, sets them at work in their proper times and places, and turns them to the advantage of the person possessed of them. Without it learning is pedantry and wit impertinence ; and even virtue itself looks like weakness, wanting discretion. *Addison*.—Knowledge hath two pillars, learning and discretion ; the greatest scholar without his two eyes of discretion and honesty is like blind Samson—apt to no good, able to much mischief. *T. Adams*.—Discretion does not only show itself in words, but in all the circumstances of action, and is like an under-agent of providence to guide and direct us in the ordinary concerns of life. *Steele*.

13. While some among mankind are acting as if right and wrong, life and soul and God, are dread realities, others cleave to the dust like the serpent's brood ; while some devote their lives to the attainment of virtue, the improvement of character, the preparation for death, others eat, drink, live, think, wish as if the earth enclosed and satisfied man. What a difference of character and of main purpose, what a difference of thoughts reigning in the intellect and over the heart ! Could two worlds of material sub-

stance made by the hand of God differ so widely ? If the unbelievers are enlightened, the others are benighted ; if the world of spiritual minds are in the light, the other world is blind and in darkness, "and in love with darkness." T. D. W.

14. Frowardness of evil. "Froward" is *fromward*. And so man is not so much a wanderer as one who deliberately sets his face in the wrong direction ; he is not so much unstable as perverse. He likes to gaze on forbidden sights, he lurks where he may hear unrighteous words, and lingers in the atmosphere of unholy thoughts. S. S. T.

16-22. The discourse takes a new direction. The blessings of wisdom and knowledge, of guidance and protection, have already been set before those addressed, and also deliverance from evil. But there is one special evil that has not yet been brought particularly into view in this address. It is that of *incontinence*. True wisdom will be certain to deliver those who possess it from all defiling and destructive intercourse with the unchaste. This constitutes the closing theme of warning, and the writer is so much in earnest that he exhibits more than usual fervor and more of poetic energy.

17. *The covenant of her God* shows that in the ceremony of marriage at that time appeal was made to God, who was called to witness the vows and promises made. The adulterous woman (and such is the one meant here) breaks these vows, or this covenant. She has a double load of guilt, that which respects her husband and that which has respect to God. M. S.—There is a season when youth becomes independent and intolerant of control, when gentle guidance is mistaken for love of interference and of power, when the youth and the maiden think scorn to follow the ways and maxims of the parent, the friend, the teacher, and take pride in forming a code and gathering maxims of their own ; in speaking their own words and walking after the light of their own eyes. These are critical days in every man's life—days which determine whether he is to be a pilgrim to the light, or to drop down into the darkness—days when he is made or marred forever. *Alford*.

18. Sentiment : "Her habitation will sink into certain destruction and ruin." There is plainly a reference to the earth as swallowing up Korah and his company ; this is, therefore, a loud note of warning to the imprudent and unsuspecting youth, who may be enticed by the adulteress. It is still more fully developed in the next verse. M. S.—"Inclineth" falls far

short of giving the full sense of the Hebrew, for the meaning is not merely that her house is an inclined plane verging down toward death and hell, but that both herself and her house sink down bodily, as it were, into the open jaws of hell. As in the case of Korah and his troop (Num. 16 : 30-34), so underneath her house and all her adulterous household the earth opens and swallows them up alive, and down they sink to the realms of the lost ! Of all who go into her house for such guilty purposes, none ever return again ; the steps of no one ever again take hold of the paths of life ! Alas ! what a record is this ! Oh, might this awful truth be made to blaze out in glaring light athwart the doorway

of every such house of infamy and crime ! No return from these foul precincts to the paths of purity and life ! This house sinks down, carrying all its guilty ones to the realms of the dead—to the depths of hell !

22. It was the more in point to speak of adulterers as soon perishing from the land of Canaan because by the Mosaic law their crime was punishable with death. (See Deut. 22 : 22-24.) Civil law may be less stern in our times, but the laws of life, engrafted into every human body, bring down a swift and terrible retribution upon this form of sin. Of all sinners on the earth it is most true of these that they do not live out half their days. H. C

CHAPTER III.

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| <p>1 My son, forget not my law ;
But let thine heart keep my commandments :
2 For length of days, and years of life,
And peace, shall they add to thee.
3 Let not mercy [or, <i>kindness</i>] and truth forsake thee :
Bind them about thy neck ;
Write them upon the table of thine heart :
4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding
In the sight of God and man.
5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart,
And lean not upon thine own understanding :
6 In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he shall direct [or, <i>make plain</i>] thy paths.
7 Be not wise in thine own eyes ;
Fear the LORD, and depart from evil :
8 It shall be health to thy navel,
And marrow [or, <i>refreshing</i>] to thy bones.
9 Honour the LORD with thy substance,
And with the firstfruits of all thine increase :
10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty,
And thy fats shall overflow with new wine.
11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD ;
Neither be weary of his reproof :
12 For whom the LORD loveth he reproveth ;
Even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.
13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.</p> | <p>14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver,
And the gain thereof than fine gold.
15 She is more precious than rubies :
And none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her.
16 Length of days is in her right hand ;
In her left hand are riches and honour.
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her :
And happy is every one that retaineth her.
19 The LORD by wisdom founded the earth ;
By understanding he established the heavens.
20 By his knowledge the depths were broken up,
And the skies drop down the dew.
21 My son, let not them depart from thine eyes ;
Keep sound wisdom and discretion ;
22 So shall they be life unto thy soul
And grace to thy neck.
23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely,
And thy foot shall not stumble.
24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid :
Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.
25 Be not afraid of sudden fear,
Neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh :
26 For the LORD shall be thy confidence,</p> |
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And shall keep thy foot from being taken.
 27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due,
 When it is in the power of thine hand to do it.
 28 Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again,
 And to-morrow I will give ;
 When thou hast it by thee.
 29 Devise not evil against thy neighbour,
 Seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.
 30 Strive not with a man without cause,
 If he have done thee no harm.
 31 Envy thou not the man of violence,

And choose none of his ways.
 32 For the perverse is an abomination to the LORD :
 But his secret [or, *friendship*] is with the upright.
 33 The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked ;
 But he blesseth the habitation of the righteous.
 34 Surely he scorneth the scorers,
 But he giveth grace unto the lowly.
 35 The wise shall inherit glory ;
 But shame shall be the promotion of fools.

1-10. *How the best results of living are to be secured.* In five couplets of two verses each, each couplet consisting of a direction and a promise or reason, Solomon here details *the best policy to attain success in this life*. As if considering the matter simply with reference to this world, there is an implied contrast with the policy pursued by worldly men. The directions which he gives are summarily these : The observance of God's commands, particularly the practice of kindness and faithful dealing with men ; a self-forgetting trust in God and an answering thankful recognition of His every gift ; a humble, filial fear of God that restrains from evil ; a hearty consecration of earthly substance, with an habitual surrender of the first-fruits of all income, and a right reading and use of trials as parts of God's training. And the promises or reasons for adhering to these directions are these : The possession and enjoyment of a long and peaceful life, of the favor of God and man, of Divine, unerring guidance in every plan and its execution, of personal and spiritual health and vigor, of abundant success in toil, and of a sense of Divine comfort, increased strength and refinement, from affliction.

Briefly consider each of these directions with its associated promise. Vs. 1 and 2 contain a general charge and a like promise. The address, "Son," is the customary endearing appellation of Oriental teachers, similar in use and meaning to the modern "reader" or "hearer" of book or pulpit. *How not to forget* is plainly hinted in the heart-keeping or daily regard of God's commandments. One who is always obeying needs no reminder of duty. The promise here is very broad, and presents a most inviting picture to every thoughtful, experienced person. It is of *prolonged, peaceful life* ! It is well to note that the point of the sacred writers in recording such promises as these is not to set forth the hope of reward as a direct chief motive to goodness, but it is rather to show

that the peace and pleasantness which the heart craves, and for which it is made, belong to and are found only in the ways of wisdom or obedience to God's commands. In vs. 3 and 4 the direction refers to the practice of kindness and fidelity in human relations, and seems to include the commands of the second table, covering all neighbor-love. These heart traits, which distinguish good men from evil, are to be worn about the neck, not as an outward amulet or charm, but as a manifest joy of the wearer in their intrinsic worth and beauty. As great truths and principles of action, too, they are to be engraven upon the heart while the heart is impressible ; that so they may control the will and the life permanently. And the result or fruit of this habitual neighbor-love is twofold. the *favor*, the helpful sympathy of God and man, and *good success* (rather than "good understanding"), or true prosperity.

A still more important direction follows in vs. 5 and 6. It is always central and chief among the Divine instructions, because upon it everything depends. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart !* Solomon adds what is essential to give a full and clear impression of this positive charge : *Trust not in thyself !* He here implies the fact, which always needs emphasis, that there are only two objects of man's trust and worship, God or himself. That trust in self is the sheerest folly and trust in God the merest dictate of sound judgment, is proven by this, that we *are* dependent, weak, ignorant, and are *not* gods, while He *is* the all-controlling, all-knowing, sovereign God. On Him we may lean at every step. In Him we may rest through every change of experience. But He wills that our trust be *wholly* in Him. He solicits an undivided heart, and will not share our love with another. The wholly trusting soul commits its minutest thought and plan of life to His guiding inspiration and controlling supervision, and every minutest result is safe,

sure, and satisfying. Self-conceit reverses and so destroys trust in God, and leads away from God into evil. Its proper counteracting force is a just and filial fear of God, and a giving up of evil ways. More specifically, self-conceit sets men, as it did Solomon, upon personal aggrandizement and indulgence, upon the practice of vices which sap the health of body and mind. And hence the meaning and fitness of the peculiar promise contained in v. 8. To the humbled returning prodigal lost health and vigor shall be restored to body and soul. "He who makes holiness happy in heaven, makes holiness healthful on earth."

Another and plainer "command with promise" we have in vs. 9 and 10. God is *honored* by the consecration of our *substance*, as well as of ourselves. He asks of every one a *first* portion of all the increase or income which His bounty bestows. He asks it not because He needs it, but that our habitual giving may help to develop in us His own spirit of expansive benevolence. The methods by which we may thus honor Him, the principles and details of *giving*, we find in the New Testament Epistles. And surely the return here figuratively promised, yet in literal language, is as ample as its meaning is plain. Plenty shall be bestowed upon the liberal and cheerful giver. B.

1. Let the ground of all thy religious actions be *obedience*; examine not why it is commanded, but observe it because it is commanded. True obedience neither procrastinates nor questions. *Quarles*.—It is obeying God *willingly* that is accepted; the Lord hates that which is forced, it is rather a tax than an offering. Cain served God grudgingly; he brought his sacrifice, not his heart. If a willing mind be wanting, there wants that flower which should perfume our obedience and make it a sweet-smelling savor unto God. *T. Watson*.

2. A life led in religion and in holy exercises seemeth to conduce to long life. There are in this kind of life these things, leisure, admiration, and contemplation of heavenly things, joys not sensual, noble hopes, wholesome fears, sweet sorrows. *Bacon*.

3. The two elements of a morally perfect character. "Mercy," shutting out all forms of selfishness and hate. "Truth," shutting out all deliberate falsehood, all hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious. E. H. P.

4. In other words, "Thou shalt find favor and be truly prospered, God and man both bearing witness to thy well directed efforts." M. S.

5. The great works of God which are before us declare His wisdom, goodness, and power;

and the voice of nature in all her works speaks in the language of the wise king, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding." Happy are they who listen to this still voice! they will act not only the safest but the most rational part. *Bishop Sherlock*.

Trust in the Lord. Faith is not the forced and passive adherence of a spirit vanquished by proofs; it is a power of the soul which does not content itself with receiving the truth, but seizes it, embraces it, identifies itself with it, and permits itself to be carried by it toward all the consequences which it indicates or commands. Direct knowledge does not call into requisition the living forces of the soul; it is a passive state, honored by no spontaneity. But in the act of faith (for it is an act and not a state) the soul is in some sort creative; if it does not create the truth, it draws it from itself, appropriates, realizes it. Under its influence an idea becomes a fact, a fact forever present. Thought, supported by a power of the soul, then manifests all its dignity in revealing its true independence; man multiplies his life, extends his universe, and attains the perfect stature of a thinking being. His dignity is derived from believing, not from knowing. Faith is invested with a character still more elevated, when it takes its point of departure from the word of a witness, whose soul ours has penetrated, and recognized its authority. Then, under a new name, that of confidence, it attaches itself to the noblest elements of our nature, sympathy, gratitude, and love; it is the condition of the social relations and constitutes their true beauty. Far from contradicting reason, it is the fact of a sublime reason. *Vinet*.

Lean not upon thine own understanding. If we are to make our ascent into the higher plane of true Christian experience, all the ties which bind us down or hold us to our feet must be effectually cut by our habitual self-renunciations. Our expectation must be rested on God, not on pillars of any kind below—pillars are not wanted under wings. H. B.

6. Acknowledge Him. The English word "acknowledge" represents only one of the many meanings which are to be found in the original word. As used in the passage before us it describes nothing less comprehensive than the whole action of man's spiritual being when face to face with the Eternal God. To "know" God in truth is "to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him with all the heart, with all the mind, with all the soul, and with all the strength; to worship Him, to give Him

thanks, to put our whole trust in Him, to call upon Him, to honor His holy Name and His Word, and to serve Him truly. . . . In the sphere of intellect no less than in that of active life acknowledge God and be humble. Such humility as we learn upon our knees is the best foundation of all solid knowledge. The acknowledgment of God, the Highest Truth, the First of facts, leads us to love and to seek fact and truth everywhere, and to reap the intellectual reward of doing so. *Liddon.*

In all thy ways. The chief agents in our history are God and ourselves. From no portion of the story of life can we exclude God. His purpose, and thought, and will are in each part and in the whole. Every step that we take works out some part of the plan of life which He has laid down for us ; so that God is in our history, in a certain sense, far more than we ourselves are in it. *S. Martin.*—Religion is a thing between man and his Maker ; not between man and himself, not between man and society, not between man and the State. All our relations and duties to these, and theirs to us, come under the law of morality ; and though morality, with its practical relations and duties, receives inspiration and guidance from the doctrines and ordinances of religion, yet when we rise to religion itself, entering her invisible and heavenly tabernacle, we pass out of all merely moral connections and are in the presence of God. There are two parties, and only two. The business of religion, therefore, is to bring offerings to Him, and, in answer to our prayers, to take blessings from Him. It sets open the channel of communion, where there is this incessant spiritual passing and repassing between the Infinite Heart of Love which is open there, and these hearts of ours, weak and struggling, uneasy and hungry and sinning, here. By this spiritual interchange our whole life opens a path into heaven, and the blessed life of heaven opens down upon us. *F. D. H.*

We have leave to be particular in recommending our affairs to the conduct and care of the Divine Providence. Those that would have good speed must pray for it, *this day, in this affair* ; thus we must in all our ways acknowledge God. *H.*—Most compensating is the habit of conducting our whole life with a reference to the leadings of Providence. Since it is not in man to direct his steps, let him seek the direction of God. And this direction is twofold ; that of providential indications and that of revealed duty. We are not left without signs in the course of events concerning us which serve to show where our path lies. We must

not mistake our own wishes and fears, our likes and dislikes, our worldly ease and interest for the leadings of Providence ; but we may with justice examine every proposed step with reference to our character, talents, age, station, and circumstances. But still more important is it to regard the path of duty as the path of Providence. The revelation of God's will in the Scriptures is our pillar of cloud and of fire. When we go where this directs, we cannot but go aright. If instead of so often asking what is agreeable, or tending to worldly happiness, we were constantly to ask what is duty, we should attain greater holiness, greater usefulness, and greater peace of mind. *J. W. A.*

Let not fortune, which hath no name in Scripture, have any in thy divinity. Let Providence, not chance, have the honor of thy acknowledgments. Mark well the paths and windings ways thereof, but be not too wise in the construction or sudden in the application. The hand of Providence writes often by abbreviations, hieroglyphics, or short characters which are not to be made out but by a hint or key from that Spirit which indited them. *Browne.*—Then doth religion flourish in the soul when it knows how to naturalize spiritual things and to spiritualize natural things. We may judge of our spiritual state by the delightful and customary actions of our lives. *J. Mason.*

Our business is the study of sincerity and pure intention ; and then, certainly, our blessed guide will not suffer us to lose our way for want of light ; we have His promise that if *in all our ways we acknowledge Him, He will direct our paths.* *L.*—God's providence will shape our paths, and God's Spirit will direct us within, and God's Word will counsel us. If we will wait and watch we shall not be left undirected. It is wonderful how much practical wisdom about the smallest perplexities of daily life comes to men who keep both their feet and their wishes still until Providence—or, as the world prefers to call it, "circumstances"—clears a path for them. No doubt in all our lives there come times when we seem to have been brought into a blind alley, and cannot see where we are to get out ; but it is very rare indeed that we do not see one step in advance the duty which lies next us. And be sure of this, that if we are content to see but one step at a time, and take it, we shall find our way made plain. *A. M.*

Multitudes of disciples fall out of course for no less positive reason than that they actually steer themselves out of God's operation. One

goes into an employment the right of which he is not sufficiently sure of to have a good conscience in it. Another galls himself in a right employment, by the consciously wrong manner in which he carries it on. A third goes into company that consciously does him injury, yet still continues to go. A male disciple turns himself to the pursuit of honor, a female disciple to the worship of fashion; one to the shows of condition, the other to the more personal vanities of dress. Thousands again will let their lusts and appetites get above their affections, their bodies above their minds. Some are nursing their pride, and some their envy, driven of fierce winds by the gustiness of one, eaten out and barnacled by the water vermin of the other. These and such like are the small helms which all you keep turning who turn yourselves away. You ask why it is, half grievingly, that you fall away from God so often and lose the savor of His friendship so easily? But the very simple fact, if you could see it, is that you really steer yourselves away; allowing yourselves in modes of life that even turn you off from God as by your own act. H. B.

Christian principle is to be shown by the majority of men in a commonplace sphere, and it is exactly by showing it on commonplace occasions that we shall, under God's blessing, brace ourselves for the heavier trials and more arduous responsibilities which He may see fit at any moment to lay upon any one of us. What a dignity does it give to our daily life to remember that by consistent, quiet maintenance of Christian principle on trivial occasions we may cherish and educate a faith and love which shall burn brightly in the hour of real trial. E. M. G.—He who is a Christian in little things is not a little Christian. He is the greatest Christian and the most useful. The baptism of these little outlying things shows that he is full of grace, for these are grace's overflowings, and they are ever the overflowings of the full well that refresh the desert. The great centre must be fully occupied before the stream can reach that outer edge. *Arnot.*

Small affairs, like the smaller coin, are perpetually passing through our hands; in this currency the general business of our spiritual life is transacted. It much concerns us, therefore, to mark how the little duties are done and the petty annoyances borne by us. Singly, they appear almost nothing; multiplied, they yield the grand total of life. *R. Lee.*—God works not alone in our great affairs, but whatsoever happens to us proceeds from His appointment. It is by looking at His hand in the common

events of life that we acquire the habit of depending upon Him, and of feeling that He is indeed always at our side. If we carry this doctrine into life, rest on its truth, and look for its evidence in the little troubles and difficulties, the little benefits and enjoyments of each day, we shall become convinced that God is ever busied with our guidance, and we shall find a comfort in this conviction that will be more than a match for the fruits of every other dependence. We shall learn to feel that He is ever about our path and about our bed, watching our every step and noting our every want, as one who has the full charge and care of us. II. H.

The intimate and affectionate relationship opened between the individual Christian and his heavenly Father finds its field of exercise in two principles—the doctrine of a particular Providence and that of the proper efficacy of prayer in relation to the ordinary events of life. It is easy to see in what manner a cordial belief of these principles tends to give vivacity and intensity to the religious affections; for it is thus that the very same world of cares, fears, hopes, which tends to obliterate the moral sentiments of other men, becomes to the affectionate Christian an efficacious discipline of faith and love. I. T.—Finally, the suggestions of this verse may be summarized in two leading truths, inseparably associated and each responsive to the other: 1. The way of duty and the sure means of highest attainment in character and of the best success in life are found in patient waiting on God, in seeking to know His will and in doing as we are taught that will alone. 2. In His gracious dealing—*i.e.*, in His dealing with those who wait, and seek, and obey (for such only are subjects of His grace), God's Spirit and providence always work together in shaping out the daily life; and in the shaping of events He always answers the prayer of the trustful, obedient soul in the best way and with the best results. B.

7, 8. Conceit of one's own wisdom shuts out all trust in God's wisdom. Such self-flattery may be pleasing; it is none the less self-ruinous. It is plainly thought of here as opposed to the fear of the Lord and to departing from evil. Solomon would say, Do not be so self-conceited as to be reckless of God's counsels and defiant toward His warnings. Shun these fearful evils. So shall wisdom be health to thy muscles (better than "navel") and marrow to thy bones. Physical health doubtless comes from obeying the physical laws under which God has framed the human body. Perhaps the writer

meant to suggest tacitly that wisdom insures health of soul as well as health of body. H. C.

9. This command embodies the principle and extent of all offerings. The high place and prominence assigned to this vital duty is indicated in the directions embodied in the worship of the patriarchs, in the details of the Mosaic ritual, in the words and acts of Christ, and the expressions of His inspired apostles. In all dispensations alike the setting apart a portion of the first and best of *all* increase to God's use, for the support and extension of all means of spiritual and temporal good to men for Christ's sake, is clearly inculcated as an imperative duty. It is set forth, too, as a part of worship, equally essential as prayer, meditation upon the Word and communion with the Spirit of God. Indeed, we find in the Bible more promises of personal return to him that *gives* to the Lord than to him that *prays* in the Spirit. B.

The moment religion begins to comprise our life, the moment our life begins to be religion, we begin to give. Imparting, bestowing, is the essence of Christianity. It is a necessity of our religious vitality. It supplies our own inward need. True, we do not give aid to the needy and comfort to the distressed for the purpose of cultivating holy graces within ourselves, or, if we do, we have poor success; our giving is the fruit of those graces. And yet, like other fruits, it carries the seed also, hidden in its heart. So our benevolence grows, and except it bear fruit it will not grow. It may be covered with blossoms and redolent with perfume; but the seed of increase is only in the yield of ripened fruit. *Cable.*

Honor the Lord. The principle which it is of most consequence to seize appears to be this, that a man's benefactions to the Church and to the poor are really offerings of pious gratitude, devoted directly to God. It cannot be too strongly urged that such benefactions are only given rightly when the giver distinctly contemplates God Himself as the real though ultimate receiver of them; and this implies that the transaction is lifted out of the domain of secular conduct into that of religious worship. There is a real, and if real, then a most blessed sense, in which God claims for Himself what is given to charity and religion, so that it becomes a tribute consecrated to the service of the Most High. Christian men within Christ's Church can recognize Jesus in His poor members whom they relieve. They surely know that God has a kingdom among us in which His servants work, and toward which our gold can lend some aid. *Anon.*—We are God's stewards,

and the gifts that come to us are His, not ours, and are to be used for Him as He would use them. When we come to Christ's feet in consecration, we lay all we have before Him. He accepts our gifts, and then, putting them back into our hands, He says, "Go now and use them in My name among the people." J. R. M.—He tells me, as a steward for Him, to lay out the portion committed to me in the way in which it will do the most good, in which it will glorify Him most. All selfish considerations disappear at once. I am to act as God's hand, paying out for Him, investing for Him, receiving for Him, and using for myself just what will best fit me to serve Him. *Gillett.*

Though men can give to God "only of what is *His own*," yet He accepts it, less as the payment of a debt than as a free tribute of love to Him. For it is remarkable that every form of generous language is employed by Him. There is, then, a certainty that what is given to His cause will be, on the whole account, no loss. What men in a pure spirit render to God will come back to them here or meet them hereafter in a manner to testify that their Lord has not forgotten. J. F.—The only motive recognized in Christ's service is that of willing surrender for His dear love's sake. He counts nothing as given to Him which is not given joyfully. Mechanical service, in which there is no conscious presence of the one motive, robs many of us of the blessing. All Christian giving tends to become merely habitual, and to slip off the one foundation; and there is need for continual effort to link each act directly with the great motive. Habit takes the gloss and beauty off our acts. It does more. It changes their character, while it leaves their appearance unaffected. If all our so-called Christian offerings were put through the sieve how much would fall as pure grain on the floor of Christ's barn? How can such glad willingness be secured and maintained? Only by looking continually to Jesus. If we keep ourselves in touch with His great love and unspeakable gift we shall joyfully give all to Him. A. M.

Giving from right motives, on Christian principle, is a factor of immense force in disciplining the soul into a spirit of Christ-like benevolence and self-denial and into habits of generous and holy living to the glory of God. Giving cheerfully, largely, habitually, gratefully, as unto the Lord, has served to work wonders in the hearts and lives of many of God's people. It strikes at the roots of selfishness in the human heart and lays the foundation of a truly noble and Christ-like character. *Sherwood.*—In view

of the ennobling character of the act of giving, in view of its refining influence upon the heart, in view of the peculiar happiness which it affords, in view of the divineness of the charity which prompts it, and in view of the eternal advantage thereby gained of treasure laid up in heaven, it is fully evident that it is more blessed to give than to receive. *Anon.*

The first-fruits of all thine increase.

With this agree all the specific directions of the Old Testament ritual concerning offerings. It is not a portion of our unusual or unexpected gains, nor even a *part* of the excess or surplus of our regular income after common and necessary expenditures are appropriated. This is not the rule of God, whatever may be the practice of men. B.—The Mosaic law required that every Hebrew should honor God with various sacrifices, tithes, and first-fruits (Ex. 22 : 29, 30, Deut. 26 : 2, and Mal. 3 : 10, etc.). Such dutiful and grateful recognition of His bounty insured His blessing. The spirit of those laws remains in force, and must so long as God is the great Giver of all earthly good, and we are only the receivers and almoners of His bounty. H. C.—The law of Israel shows us that we ought not to appear before the Lord “empty,” or to offer to Him of that “which costs us nothing.” The prime of our years, the flower of our strength, the best of our substance, the first-fruits of all our increase, should be dedicated and devoted to Him, who makes us all we are and gives us all we have. So shall the benedictions of heaven descend upon all things around us and upon ourselves in the use of them. *Bishop Horne.*

Do not put such a dry, shrivelled comment upon the word *substance*, as though it meant giving a trifle now and then to the poor. Remember, “the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand,” or be established (Isa. 32 : 8). Do not dispense shadow when the Lord requires substance. If thy soul is liberal thou wilt devise liberal things. This text will not only remind you of liberally dispensing of your substance to the poor and needy, but also of honoring your Lord by the faith of your heart, the love of your soul, placing your whole affections upon Him, and devoting your substance, your whole spirit, soul and body, to Him ; you will not be content with notions without life, form without spirit, worship without the heart, religion without the soul. *W. Mason.*

Men are appointed to be God’s almoners. To expend upon ourselves the whole of our earthly possessions is sacrilege. We hold in our keep-

ing God’s property. We are not at liberty to use it as we please. Nor is the amount which appertains to God determined by the caprice of human inclination. A definite portion is God’s, and becomes in the highest sense *trust property*. D. D.—Our responsibility is all the greater because we are left to assess ourselves. No compulsion is to be applied, either by God or man, in order that the whole weight of the choice may be on our own shoulders. We are left to do in this matter as our hearts prompt, but we have to answer for their prompting. We stand alone with Christ, and He asks, “How much owest thou ?” The blessedness of giving is too Divine a joy for Him to keep it all to Himself, and He gives to us that we may “have somewhat to offer,” and may share with Him in that deep blessedness of which He spoke when He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” But that is only shared by those who give after His pattern, not with the hand, but with the heart, and who give the heart in all their gifts. A. M.

Another sophism is that Christians are somehow fulfilling the obligation of almsgiving when they are only paying the costs of their parochial establishments. The idea appears to be that all our expenditures for religion are to be reckoned on the credit side of heaven’s account with us. Heaven be merciful to that impiety ! Every dollar that you yield for the appointments, conveniences, adornments of your parish church, which is your own household, or the maintenance of its services, is just as much a matter of interested outlay for a full equivalent as any other provision you make for the life of yourself and your children. . . . Few “popular fallacies” have done more mischief than the maxim that “charity begins at home.” Avaricious people quote it, not intending that charity shall begin anywhere. Honesty, kindness, economy, thrift, and some other virtues start, no doubt, in the home circle. Charity very rarely begins there, because, till we pass beyond that bound, the realm of voluntary and self-sacrificing bounty is not reached. Up to that point we have been at best only “providing for our own,” doing what if we leave undone, an apostle says, we are worse than infidels. Almighty justice and Almighty love can give us no receipts for our parochial decencies. God needs none of them ; we need them, and He is gracious enough to lend us the ability to produce them. But if you were liberal enough to give half your goods for them, or faithless enough to provide none of them, so making yourself and your household heathen, your obligation to offer in other ways

of your substance to Him to whom the silver and the gold belong would stand just as it stood before, and stands everywhere. F. D. H.

Business should be chosen and prosecuted reverently and in Christian consecration ; for it is the life-work. If chosen and prosecuted only for gain, it is chosen and prosecuted in covetousness, and not in Christian love. And yet the common opinion is that business is to be chosen and prosecuted only to make money. Even good men think that Christian benevolence is to be exercised only in the giving of their gains, not in the prosecution of their business. Yet every legitimate business is in its very prosecution a service to humanity, and ought to be chosen and prosecuted in Christian love for the purpose of rendering the service, not in covetousness for the purpose of gain. Legitimate business is in its prosecution a service, because it is productive and supplies human wants. Over all the world men are industriously serving each other, producing what meets human wants. Thus viewed, the creation and circulation of products through the world, beneficent as the circulation of air and water, rises to the sublime. The circulation of the products of all countries, passing in white-sailed ships over the ocean, millions of wealth always in motion from mart to mart, a circulation so noiseless that the products of the other hemisphere flow daily through the streets unnoticed as the wind, and so equable and complete that you have only to step across the street and the product of any country is stored ready for your hand, and the table is daily spread with the products of every quarter of the globe—this circulation, all-pervading as the flow of blood in the body, binds all nations in the unity of a common interest and life. Thus political economy coincides with the Gospel in teaching that we are members one of another, and if one member suffers all the members suffer with it. It coincides with Christian ethics in the law that business should be prosecuted as a service to others, and not merely to get gain for self. An inference is that the only legitimate business for a Christian man is one which by its very prosecution renders service to society. S. Harris.

A great amount of Christian philosophy was summed up in the words of Frederick Marquand, who was an open-handed friend of every good work : “ A Christian should never be troubled because he is asked to give. If he cannot give he may well be sorry ; but if he does not wish to give he ought to be more than sorry—he should be alarmed. Lack of money is by no means so sad as is the lack of a disposition to

contribute of what one has. A man often shuts the door in the face of his best friend when he shuts off an appeal to his benevolence.”

Barns shall be filled. Commenting on this promise, one says quaintly : “ God governs barns.” And not barns only, but cargoes and ventures, stocks and all other representatives of value.

11, 12. Concerning chastening. These verses appropriately follow promises of blessing. The trustful and obedient, with whatever of prosperity, will encounter adversity. Sickness and pain, disappointment and sorrow, saddening change and bereavement, belong to every human experience. Nay, they are essential to the best training and completest development of the god-like spirit. And these are of *God*, used by Him, and always in the highest interest of His children. They are the familiar instruments by which He chastens, but only when needful. *Do not disregard or make light of them*, then, is the first part of the injunction here. Do not refuse to consider their meaning ; do not receive them indifferently or stolidly. But honor God by rightly interpreting them, by submissively accepting their purpose. Nor yet, it is added, faint or be impatient under them. Give not way to a disheartened, doubting, or complaining spirit. But still honoring God, patiently wait and trustingly “ endure as seeing Him who is invisible.” The reason of this counsel follows, and how sufficient ! *For whom the Lord loveth, He reproveth !* The fuller reason we may read in Heb. 12 : 10. And the whole Bible is full of the theme, as men everywhere need its full, clear treatment. B.

12. As a father merely qualifies the manner of the chastisement. In other words, “ If promised prosperity should be interrupted, and suffering come, remember still that when God chastens the obedient it is not from want of love for them, but only with a design to try and to purify them. Remember, moreover, that, such being the case, He will chastise in measure and in mercy, even as an affectionate father does.” M. S.—So chastening is a mark of God’s love and also a seal of sonship, for He “ scourgeth every son that He receiveth.” The true father chastens. Mark, it is not punishment that God inflicts, but chastening. It is not anger or hatred that makes Him at times severe, denying the child’s requests. It is love that leads Him to chasten. J. R. M.

“ Chastisement ” is not a pleasant word, as it is ordinarily connected in our minds with the idea of displeasure and severity on the part of him who employs it, and with suffering and recoil on

the part of him who is its subject. Yet "chastisement" is, in its root idea, "correction" as a means of improvement. It is akin to instruction and guidance and training. It represents the work of the father, the teacher, the trainer, the guide. In primitive thought the "rod" is a symbol of authority, and its use is synonymous with punishment; but, with improved conceptions of parental authority and government, the use of the rod is recognized as for the loving guidance and control in the correct way of the one under training. It makes all the difference in the world whether we look at our providential afflictions as chastisements, or at the loving Father who is proving His love by these chastisements. If we look at the chastening, it seemeth to be "not joyous, but grievous." If we look at God as our loving Father, we can be sure that whatever He sends to us is the best thing possible for us; and therefore His chastenings are to be welcomed as a fresh proof of His affection. . . . Proved by the supreme test of friendship, an unfailing regard to the fullest and noblest development of the object of affection, how faithful and true is our Divine Friend! The varied events of our life He designs to subserve this common end—that they all be stepping-stones of progress; and, seeing the outcome of His gracious plan concerning us, He spares no discipline, no pain or grief, that must be used to rouse the soul and urge it forward. Let us not doubt the loving purpose of this Friend of friends, nor weary of His training, nor neglect to notice the tokens of His presence by the way. Along the straitened path we tread, no other than our Lord Himself is leading us, to bring us to higher ground beyond, where we shall see more clearly and know more surely, and through the sacrifice and struggle of the past shall apprehend and share His peace. H. C. T.

As life continues we learn that our greatest helpers are our antagonists, that the things we have to overcome do us the most good. Carlyle says: "Evil once manfully fronted ceases to be evil. There is a generous battle hope in place of dead, passive misery. The evil itself has become a kind of good." The highest forms of civilization are not found where men lie lazily in tropic sunshine, and smell the flowers and suck the fruits of a perfumed and perpetual summer. The rocks of New England are richer in noble character than the sugar plantations and tobacco fields of Cuba. The storm-girdled isle of Great Britain is a better home for the soul than the luxurious plains of Hindostan. It is the lions in our way that teach us courage, the great mountains give endurance; the rough

roads, fortitude; the thorns and briars, patience; and the gates of brass, which we cannot pass through, may teach us humility and submission. The hard lot which we bemoan has been to earth's noblest souls the school-ground of a victorious opportunity. Failures have become stepping-stones to triumph, doubts have been transformed into clearer and stronger faith, wrong wrestled with has wedded the heart to eternal righteousness. J. H. Barrows.

So God has us all the while in schooling under His providence, reducing our foolishness, and wearing out or worrying down our dictations. There is a grand tiring-out principle in this rule of Providence, by which we are all the while being schooled into God's order. And in this manner the old Christian gets at last to have a wonderful wisdom in his experience without even knowing it, because it is hid in his more chastened tempers, and never thinks of being a rational knowledge at all. Pressing on thus close upon his last limit, wrought in by Christ's Word and Spirit and providence, his secret mind, if not perfectly conformed to God, gets to be so very nearly conformed that when he drops into the river to cross over, and mounts the rampart on the other shore, his last shred of discord dies out in him, and he is everlastingly free. Now that he sees Christ in clear vision as He is, he is thoroughly and completely like Him. Bushnell.

13-18. *The incomparable preciousness of attained wisdom, in its gains and gifts, in its life paths and pleasures.* The very truths already stated in vs. 1-12 are here substantially restated from another standpoint. In those verses the worth of wisdom was practically indicated in its high requirements and rich returns. Here its value is directly rated by comparison with worldly gains, treasures, and delights. Introducing and closing the statements about wisdom is a declaration that *the man who findeth and retaineth* her (vs. 13, 18) is happy. The simple implication of these words is that heavenly good, like earthly, needs to be *sought* for; that it requires appropriate effort in the use of means to be both *found* and *retained*. This ought to be a daily thought, a constant stimulus to prayer and praise, to meditation and Christ-like service. The same thought of the habitual *use of means* is also suggested in the comparison of gains (v. 14). Gain in merchandise comes from its active use in appropriate methods. So is it with the heavenly good; the increase is from the use. Pearls are probably meant by the word translated "rubies" (v. 15). They were accounted chief among all precious things, as Christ inti-

mates in the "pearl of great price." Not only is a godlike heart the most precious or costly of single objects, but all other desirable things together are incomparably inferior in worth. For godlikeness inwrought in the heart, or piety, dispenses blessings unmatched and pure in either hand abundantly (v. 16). And in vs. 17 and 18 we have the culmination of her gifts in a beautiful garden picture, taking us back to the primal paradise, with its peaceful paths amid perennial blooms, and its tree of life designed to give health and immortality. Such, these words sublimely intimate, such is wisdom's promise, such, in some appreciable measure, is the effect of genuine godliness in the life that now is. So that were there no other life, the ways of wisdom or the life of piety described and estimated in these eighteen verses bring vastly, incomparably larger returns than the paths of folly, pursued even with all possible advantages of gift and opportunity, as Solomon pursued them.

Hence we learn that piety, godliness or, as a better word, *god-likeness*, is profitable for both lives we live. *Seek first*, foremost, says Christ, *the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added*. Thus He only confirms what He here said by Solomon. But when riches, honor, and the long-nursed body fail and decay, this heavenly treasure of the Spirit abides for a new, a higher and changeless enshrinement. And this god likeness of heart whosoever will may have for the fervent, truthful asking! B.

14. If you could summon all the merchant princes of the earth, and ask them seriously what they consider the most important matter in the world, they would admit that the merchandise of religion is of more importance than the merchandise of silver. All men recognize it theoretically, but the wares of religion, so to speak, are immaterial, and cannot be seen or handled, and so they come to be considered unreal. These are all spiritual things and far removed from earthly rewards, but at the same time salvation has its value; even to the carnal judgment that value is greater than that of silver or gold. *Hullock*.

16-18. Wisdom now stands before us in angelic female form, her hands loaded with the blessings she has to bestow. The picture is exquisitely beautiful. Long life in one hand; in the other riches and honor; her ways all pleasantness and her paths *peace*—this being the word under which the Orientals group all blessings. Trees are symbols of perpetuity. A "tree of life" is therefore a perennial fountain of good, deemed worthy to represent even the joys of the heavenly paradise. This passage,

descriptive of the blessedness of wisdom, has been greatly admired for its richness and beauty. But the picture is not overdrawn. The wisdom that begins in the fear and love of God, and then gratefully accepts the guiding hand of the All-wise Father, is a fountain of perpetual blessedness. H. C.

16. Religion is as favorable for long life as for happiness. She promotes long life by destroying those evils, the tendency of which is to limit the duration of human existence. The direct effect of true religion is to increase the period of human life. "Length of days is in her right hand." *N. M' Michael*.—Piety inspires that moderation in all things which is equally favorable to the faculties of the body and the mind; it tempers the passions of youth when most in need of restraint by subjecting the body to the mind, the appetites to the control of reason, and reason itself to the control of God. It guards us alike from the extremes of irritation and sorrow, on the one hand, or of intoxicating pleasure on the other; teaching us to "rejoice as if we rejoiced not, and to weep as if we wept not, because the fashion of this world passeth away." To the attainment of moderate wealth piety is favorable, inasmuch as it promotes habits of regularity and industry, inspires a proper desire to excel in our calling, and recommends us by a character of integrity. A moderate zeal for the acquirement of property, with a view to useful or necessary ends, is not condemned, either by the voice of reason or by the Word of God. Wisdom is portrayed as "having in her left hand riches" as well as honor. *R. Hall*.—In her hand she hath rich treasures—joy to impart to them that trust her. "All the things thou canst desire" are not to be compared with what she has to bestow—"length of days," honor, a peaceful heart, friends perhaps; at any rate, a life which, be it long or short, be it dark or bright with the world's light, be it rich or poor, be it a failure or a success in the eyes of men, has its life within it, has its joy and peace in heaven with God; and leads on, through sorrow and discipline, through merciful trials and victorious strife to a perfect immortality wherein *he* shall live serene, wise with the wisdom and righteous with the righteousness of the Holy and All-wise Jehovah, who hath trusted in the Lord, and cast himself upon the mercy of Christ! A. M.

17. It adds somewhat to the vividness of the imagery to remember that the two words "ways" and "paths" describe the two kinds of roads, the "highway" and the "byway." In both these he who was guided by Wisdom

would walk securely. E. H. P.—Wisdom's way is a high way. It is always reaching up out of littlenesses ; it ranges at loftier levels, it has the world at its feet. Wisdom's way always has one fixed mark. For that it steers. It throws lesser things aside as it goes, and it goes straight and earnest to a goal, and that goal is the glory of God. Wisdom's way is a way of usefulness. It always puts usefulness first—before pleasure, before profit. To go in wisdom's way is to go in sweet fellowship. They who walk there walk hand in hand. It is full of sympathies, it is a road which lies in the communion of all saints, and all love all in wisdom's way. Above all, Christ is there. They walk with Jesus, they lean on Jesus, they are satisfied with Jesus, and they shall travel on and reign with Jesus in that city where they go. J. V.

Christian disciples live primarily for duty, and pleasure comes as a certain consequence. And there is in it what may be called a principal of accumulation ; it does not vanish in the enjoyment, but, while passing as a sentiment, remains as a reflection and grows into a store of complacent consciousness which the mind retains as a possession left by what has been possessed. To have *had* such pleasure *is* pleasure, and is so still the more, the more of it is past. Whereas mere delights of sensation when past are wholly gone, leaving nothing to go into a calm, *habitual* sense of being happy. J. F.—To live for any worldly or merely selfish joy is, indeed, unworthy of the dignity of a true man ; but to live for that highest happiness which God has inseparably connected with loving service to Him is to live so as to glorify God and thus to forever enjoy Him. To make the joy which there is in duty and in love an end of our desire and striving does not involve a selfish spirit when this joy is not sought for its own sake alone, but because duty is sought and joy belongs to the very essence of duty-doing. Duty is from its very nature a joyous thing. Shall we then live and labor for the rewards of joy and happiness ? Yes, in the sense of living and laboring for duty, for holiness, for purity and truth. That is living for happiness and joy in the best sense, and for the only true happiness and joy that there can be for any soul in all the world. Live for the happiness which is inherent in the very essence of duty. Live for the joy that is in self-sacrifice, even as Jesus, for the joy of the self-sacrifice and love that was set before Him, endured the cross. Live for the rewards of righteousness, the pleasures forevermore at God's right hand. To live for anything lower will never bring true happiness ;

not though we laugh and sing on every step of our journey through life ; for there is no really deep and abiding joy except in righteousness, in service, and in love. G. B. Stevens.

It is a common impression with persons who hear but do not accept the calls of Christ and His salvation, that they are required to be somewhat less in order to be Christian. They hear it declared that in becoming little children, humble, meek, poor in spirit ; in ceasing from our will and reason, and in giving up ourselves, our eagerness, revenge, and passion—thus, and thus only, can we be accepted ; but, instead of taking all these as so many figures antagonistic to our pride, our ambition, and the determined self-pleasing of our sin, they take them absolutely as requiring a real surrender and loss of our proper manhood itself. Exactly contrary to this, the Gospel requires them to be more than they are—greater, higher, nobler, stronger—all which they were made to be in the power of their endless life. H. B.

19. Hitherto wisdom has been thought of in relation to men. Now the question comes, What is she in relation to God ? and the answer is, that the creative act implies a Divine wisdom, through which the Divine will acts. We have, as it were, the germ of the thought developed in ch. 8, the first link in the chain which connects this “wisdom” with the Divine Word, the Logos of John's Gospel. What is here attributed to her is, in Psalm 33 : 6, ascribed to “the Word of Jehovah,” to “the breath or Spirit of His mouth.” So John asserts of the Word, “by Him”—*i.e.*, through Him, all things came into being (John 1 : 3). E. H. P.

21-35. The monitor now resumes his hortatory address to his pupil, to persuade him to cleave to the pursuit of wisdom. It will keep him in safety ; he may lie down in security and sleep sweetly, for no fear of destruction will disturb him, since Jehovah is his Keeper (vs. 21-26). The next five verses are *prohibitions*. One must not withhold any feasible good from his neighbor ; he must not put off a favor to him which he can now do ; he must not slander him ; he must not causelessly contend with him ; he must not be emulous of him (vs. 27-31). All this must not be done, for Jehovah hates the perverse, while He is the Friend of the righteous ; His curse is on the house of the wicked, while the habitation of the just is blessed (vs. 32, 33). Inasmuch as He mocks scorers, and shows favor to the righteous, the wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall take away fools (vs. 34, 35).

26. Sentiment : “Jehovah will impart to the

strong confidence, and keep thee from concealed dangers." For similar declarations, see Psalm 78 : 7 ; Job 8 : 14 ; 31 : 24. M. S.—Duties are ours, events are God's. This removes an infinite burden from the shoulders of a miserable, tempted, dying creature ! On this consideration only can he securely lay down his head and close his eyes. *R. Cecil.*

27, 28. It behooves him to come down to its practical applications and show us how true wisdom will make us live in the midst of a world of want and of suffering—a world in which every human being, however lowly or uncomely, is yet a man and a brother. First in order he says : The good you have it in your power to bestow upon one in need thereof, you must not withhold. The fact that another needs it and that you can give it makes it due from yourself to him. When your neighbor's pinching want drives him to your door, say not to him, "Go, and come again," as if your hard heart and close hand would fain stave off a painful call in hope it would never return. When thou hast it by thee, let thy heart give with the promptness of love. This is true wisdom. Man should live not to swell his own pile, but to bless his fellows ; not to amass for himself, but to impart to others. God fills the world around us with want that we may never lack the opportunity of putting forth a kind hand to some needy one. The special point to be noticed here is the underlying assumption that help is *due* to the weak from the strong. This is the doctrine of practical wisdom. That life of wisdom which flows along with such inimitable peace and blessedness as we have seen in this chapter has a practical working side to it ; and here are some of its manifestations. *H. C.*

The All-wise has given us a complete and perfect code in a single sentence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This code was promulgated in the wilderness nearly fifteen centuries before the coming of Christ (Lev. 19 : 18). It is the code then not for the Christian Church merely, but for the human race. If we are to love all our neighbors as we love ourselves, of course we must study their relative claims, we must distribute our charities wisely and justly. We cannot be to everybody all that we are to ourselves. The law is to be interpreted in the light of reason and common sense. Its evident meaning is that we are to regard all whom we can reach as having special claims upon us for sympathy so far as we can know their wants, and for help so far as we can relieve their wants. We are not, ever or in anything,

to live wholly for ourselves. We are to recognize always and everywhere the brotherhood of humanity. We are to remember that we are placed in this world to do good. We are to regard all the talents and wealth that God bestows upon us as a trust. We have a right to use what we need for our own support and culture, but all beyond that belongs not to us, but to our Lord ; and we are to do good as we have opportunity. The excellence of this law is seen in its simplicity. It is easily applied to all the varying conditions. We meet a stranger in trouble of any kind. Shall we help him ? "As thyself," cries the Divine Lawgiver. We know what we would do for ourselves if we were in his place and could do it. We know what we would want somebody else to do for us in similar circumstances. Well, then, there is the measure, always ready. It is just what our Lord said at another time, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye unto them." This is the law and the prophets as well as the Gospel. This is the spirit that will revolutionize the world. *Interior.*

Acts of mercy toward those who are daily meeting us in the unromantic paths of ordinary intercourse fall properly under the head of ministries to the Lord. A true Christian will endeavor to enliven every particular of service to fellow-creatures with this consecrating intention. Whether at home or abroad, the great majority of mankind must expect their usefulness—in other words, their work for Christ—to consist in a series of familiar and oft-recurring acts, each apparently inconsiderable by itself. *J. W. A.*—Do not let us wait for great and signal opportunities of showing that we can prefer the good of others to our own. Such occur very seldom ; while small occasions occur every day in the family, in our daily intercourse with the world ; and, moreover, the great occasions are not nearly so good a test of our sincerity as the small. Great acts of self-sacrifice attract observation, are talked about, often bring honor, credit to the doer. A thousand mixed motives may impel us to these ; but the smaller acts, in which we yield our will to the will of others, postpone our convenience, our pleasure, our ease, to theirs, these, unobserved by the world, often unobserved even by the person on whose behalf they are done—these are a far truer test. *Trench.*

Our God is too great to need great deeds. If we do our duty just where He has placed us to work for Him, it will make no difference whether we labor in an obscure corner of the vineyard, where no great harvest will repay our labor, or

whether our works are seen and known of all men. The little things "that most leave undone or despised" are great enough to glorify God if we do them for Him. . . . It is the every-day life that builds up our Christian character. If we overcome the daily annoyances we grow strong and heroic, and it soon becomes, if not a pleasant, at least a cheerful task to do, bear, and suffer. The service of Christ is one that grows lighter and more pleasant as the years go by. It is this that exerts a lasting influence over the world. It is this that tests the value of religion, and proves to others that it is pure gold, and not a mere profession. *Hallock.*

No one of us lives or can live to himself. Our life transpires in every direction, abuts upon unnumbered other lives, imparts its effluence without our will or consciousness, is felt near and afar. And the littles in that life immeasurably exceed in number and in influence its important moments—its crises of distinct volition and deliberate action. Moreover, these littles are the most genuine portions of our life. They bear the impress, diffuse the aroma of our actual characters. It is in these that what we are is most felt, most penetrating, most potent for good or for evil. Our action is often not in entire harmony with our characters—is largely affected by our surroundings, so that we transcend or fall short of our proper measure. It is in look, and word, and seemingly trivial act, in the even tenor of our daily lives, in the constant outflow of example and influence that we are the most true to our own natures, and that, if we are what we ought to be, we accomplish our mission from on high, and make the world the happier and the better for our living in it. *Peabody.*

Contribute your quota to the welfare of a disordered world—you that can contribute money; you that can contribute friendly offices and kind attentions; and you that have neither wealth nor labor to spend, contribute kind looks, kind feelings, and kind words. *Hamilton.*—Every good act is charity. Your smiling in your brother's face is charity; exhortation of your fellow-men to virtuous deeds is equal to almsgiving; your putting a wanderer on the right road is charity; your removing stones and thorns and other obstructions from the road is charity. *Mahomet.*—It is one of the glories of love that it prompts the great heroisms of the world; but it is almost a greater glory that it is able to nerve for their tasks those plodding lives whose days are all so commonplace, and to inspire to faithfulness in the things that are least. There are but few who have the opportunities

or gifts for great achievements. Most of us need an inspiration for the common cares and duties that come to us almost the same on every day more than for any grand achievements. Our lives are made up of commonplaces. "If," says Robertson, "you compute the sum of happiness in any given day, you will find that it was composed of small attentions and kind looks." We want a principle that will touch and bless these details of our every-day lives. The moral heroism of the martyrs would probably be worth less to most of my readers in their conditions than the kindly, sunny atmosphere which love can breathe around our commonest tasks and joys and troubles. *Stevens.*

He who carries about a face that says, "Can I serve you?" who maintains an aspect of sincere sympathy with everybody's pleasures and sorrows, triumphs or failures; who listens to the tedious tale that unloads some breaking heart; who shakes hands as if he meant, and who really does mean, "God bless you!" who gives without hope or wish for any return; who sees no alien behind ignorance or crime, color or race, but always a fellow-creature, and limits his charity by no sect and no condition; who loses no chance of rendering a small but needed kindness, and counts no day happy in which he has not blessed some fellow-creature with an unexpected and unclaimed service; who quenches wrath by his meekness and banishes irritation by his self-control; who takes the unpopular side when it is the just one; who defends the absent or protects the weak; who calls things by their proper names at the cost of his own reputation, when virtue and vice, right and wrong are universally confounded; who is brave among social crowds and political poltroons—he is surely making himself the servant of humanity, and a chief among God's children and Christ's followers. *Anon.*

Paul tells us that we are not only to build up ourselves, but to build up one another. Henry says: "None so strong but they may be edified; none so weak but they may edify; and while we edify others we benefit ourselves." We are to look every man not on his own things, but also on the things of others. Hence the great apostle tells the Romans to follow after the things wherewith one may edify another—*i.e.*, help to build his house for him. This is the beautiful idea of co-operation presented by the apostle. Every one of us is to do something for all who are within our sphere. Every one of us needs something for our own upbuilding from all our neighbors, and just so far as we try to do good will we get good. Just so far as we

are unselfish will we find illustrated in our experience, as fact, the fable of the Oriental builder. He left his grand house unfinished, though winter was near, to assist his poorer neighbors in completing their cottages. He slept sweetly after a day of toil, and dreamed that angels were working on his walls. In the morning, lo ! it was even as he had dreamed. His own house was finished by unseen builders because, like his Divine Lord, he pleased not himself, but went about doing good. *Interior.*

32. God gives broad, simple truths in His Holy Word, as clearly as human language can express them ; and when these are received He leads the believer on to a further and higher knowledge. Thus there arises a personal, familiar intercourse, a spiritual intimacy, an individual knowledge of experience between the soul and God. Not little is the dignity, nor poor the communion, nor scant the privilege contained in this promise, "His secret is with the righteous." *E. Garbett.*

33. The family is the ordinance of God, and its underlying idea is religious. It is, indeed, a training-school for the community and the State, but only as preparatory to fitness for a place in that great family above of which the family here is a type, and for which it should be a preparation. It is the first form of human society, the foundation and source of all other forms, and as that is such will they be. It was because the family is thus the fountain-head of society, and must determine its character, that our Saviour insisted so strongly upon its sacredness. It is upon the purity, the sacredness, and the well ordering of families that the permanence of our institutions must depend. *M. H.*—A happy home is the richest of human possessions. The home circle includes all that is most precious in life. An invisible bond, uniting the members of a household in mutual love and sympathy, is the strongest tie on earth. A prosperous commonwealth is a cluster of happy homes, as homogeneous as the cells of honeycomb. Religion, as well as culture, begins at home. Religion is not a holiday habit, cut in the prevailing mode, for exhibition on Sunday in the family pew. It is a serviceable, homespun investiture for daily use. Home ties are indissoluble where its true spirit prevails. *Van Santvoord.*—There is always a spirit of the house, or law of the family, of one kind or another, blessing or cursing, forming character day by day for salvation or perdition. The law of the house works itself into the circulations and fibres of every growing branch. The youngest child in the circle is watching your face, com-

mitting your tones and motions to memory, taking your most unconscious language for a lesson, and laying up the careless revelations of your frivolity or your piety for future imitation. If he sees that all your familiar arrangements are made to redound to your selfish enjoyment, why should he not turn out a self-seeker ? If, on the other hand, he beholds in your daily example some noble evidence of a devotion to God and fidelity to right which shape all your transactions into an offering of religion, then, unless some very cruel seduction besets him from abroad, he is a candidate for a Christian maturity. *F. D. H.*

34. Giveth grace unto the lowly. Use all means for growth in grace. The body grows stronger by exercise. Trading of money makes men grow rich ; the more we trade our faith in the promises, the richer in faith we grow. If ye would be growing Christians, be humble Christians. 'Tis observed in some countries (as in France) the best and largest grapes which they make their wine of grow on the lower sort of vines ; the humble saints grow most in grace. God *giveth* grace to the humble. *T. Watson.*—Mercies make a humble soul glad, but not proud. A humble soul is lowest when his mercies are highest ; he is least when he is greatest ; he is most poor when he is most rich. *T. Brooks.*

"Have every day lower thoughts of yourselves," wrote one who made heart culture a life-work ; "higher thoughts of your Christ, kinder thoughts of your brethren, and more hopeful thoughts of all around you." The person who cultivates such habits of thought as are here enjoined will have a heart so free from guile and so full of joy that he will seem to himself to dwell in the very border land of heaven. On the other hand, the person who is proud of his own possessions and achievements, who refuses to glorify and follow after Christ, who is suspicious of those whom he ought to love, and has no faith in the honor and aspirations of mankind, is certain sooner or later to have heaviness and sorrow for his portion. His pride will have a fall, and the despair of his heart will be like unto that which torments devils. *Interior.*

Thus wrote Norman McLeod : "God knows me better than I know myself. He knows my gifts and powers, my failings and my weaknesses, what I can do and not do. So I desire to be led and not to lead ; to follow Him ; and I am quite sure that He has thus enabled me to do a great deal more in ways which seem to me almost a waste in life in advancing His king-

dom, than I could have in any other way. How kind, how good, how compassionate art Thou, O God! O my Father, keep me humble! Help me to have respect toward my fellow-men, to recognize their several gifts as from Thee. Deliver me from the diabolical sins of malice, envy, or jealousy, and give me hearty joy in my brother's good, in his work, in his gifts and talents; and may I be truly glad in his superiority to myself, if God be glorified. Root out all weak vanity, all devilish pride, all that is abhorrent to the mind of Christ."

CHAPTER IV.

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| <p>1 HEAR, <i>my</i> sons, the instruction of a father,
And attend to know understanding ;</p> <p>2 For I give you good doctrine ;
Forsake ye not my law.</p> <p>3 For I was a son unto my father,
Tender and only beloved in the sight of my
mother.</p> <p>4 And he taught me, and said unto me,
Let thine heart retain my words ;
Keep my commandments, and live :</p> <p>5 Get wisdom, get understanding ;
Forget <i>it</i> not, neither decline from the words
of my mouth :</p> <p>6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee ;
Love her, and she shall keep thee.</p> <p>7 Wisdom <i>is</i> the principal thing ; <i>therefore</i>
get wisdom :</p> <p>Yea, with all thou hast gotten get under-
standing.</p> <p>8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee :
She shall bring thee to honour, when thou
dost embrace her,</p> <p>9 She shall give to thine head a chaplet of
grace :
A crown of beauty shall she deliver to thee.</p> <p>10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings ;
And the years of thy life shall be many.</p> <p>11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom ;
I have led thee in paths of uprightness.</p> <p>12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be
straitened ;
And if thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.</p> <p>13 Take fast hold of instruction ; let her not
go :
Keep her ; for she is thy life.</p> | <p>14 Enter not into the path of the wicked,
And walk not in the way of evil men.</p> <p>15 Avoid it, pass not by it ;
Turn from it, and pass on.</p> <p>16 For they sleep not, except they have done
mischief ;
And their sleep is taken away, unless they
cause some to fall.</p> <p>17 For they eat the bread of wickedness,
And drink the wine of violence.</p> <p>18 But the path of the righteous is as the dawn-
ing light,
That shineth more and more unto the per-
fect day.</p> <p>19 The way of the wicked is as darkness :
They know not at what they stumble.</p> <p>20 My son, attend to my words ;
Incline thine ear unto my sayings.</p> <p>21 Let them not depart from thine eyes ;
Keep them in the midst of thine heart.</p> <p>22 For they are life unto those that find them,
And health to all their flesh.</p> <p>23 Keep thy heart with all diligence ;
For out of it are the issues of life.</p> <p>24 Put away from thee a froward mouth,
And perverse lips put far from thee.</p> <p>25 Let thine eyes look right on,
And let thine eyelids look straight before
thee.</p> <p>26 Make level [or, <i>weigh carefully</i>] the path of
thy feet,
And let all thy ways be established [or,
<i>ordered aright</i>].</p> <p>27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left :
Remove thy foot from evil.</p> |
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1-9. THIS chapter has three divisions, made by *My son* at the beginning of each. In the first portion (vs. 1, 2) the *children* are exhorted to listen to wise and good instruction. The writer states that, as a child he received instruction from parental affection, with counsel to observe it diligently (vs. 3, 4). The advice given was

above all things to acquire *wisdom* and never to swerve from it; for this would keep him in safety (vs. 5, 6). Wisdom is therefore the first or principal thing, and should be obtained at all events. She will exalt and honor him who attains her. She will also adorn him with wreath and diadem (vs. 7-9). M. S.

1. My son. There are but two conditions in which we can stand. One or other of them must be ours. The alternatives are, slaves of sin, or sons of God. What a contrast both in the relation and in that to which it is sustained ! Slaves or sons ! God or sin ! On the one side, tyrannous bondage ; on the other, gentle, swaying love. On the one side, the whip and the lash ; on the other, " My son, hear the instruction of thy Father." A. M.

4. Retain my words. Let any one consider the vast amount of knowledge in science and history with which the mind may be absorbed ; the daily news which is brought to every man's door ; the career open to all in politics or business ; the stimulus of endless competition ; let him look at the spirit of speculation, the hot haste, the anxiety for the future with which so many minds are filled ; and he will wonder that there can be any gaps of time which reflection can seize upon, any corner of the soul left for it ; he will not wonder that men cannot spend much deep thought on religion, but rather that it is not banished from its old seat in the mind. T. D. W.

7. *Get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.* Pray for it, give diligence in the use of all appointed means to attain it, *wait at wisdom's gate* (8 : 34). Get dominion over thy corruptions, which are thy follies ; get possession of wise principles and the habits of wisdom ; get it by experience, get it *above all thy getting* ; be more in care and take more pains to get this than to get the wealth of this world ; whatever thou forgettest, get this ; reckon it a great achievement, and pursue it accordingly. True wisdom is God's gift, and yet we are here commanded to get it because God gives it to those that labor for it. H.

13. Take fast hold of instruction ; for she is thy life. We come into the real school-life when we have left school. Duty is twofold ; duty to do, duty to endure. We have the tasks of the school to do, and the discipline of the school to bear. And the more honest we are in the first, the braver shall we be for the second. We have duties to perform. Not what you do, but how you do it, is the test. And small things done as to the Lord and not to men grow golden and precious with the stamp of honest stewardship. Our manhood is truly developed only as we make life real, and we only make life real in proportion as we take each duty, great or small, and make it great by principle, and sacred because we do it unto God. A. Mursell. — What society sorely needs in the generations yet to come upon the

stage is not more knowledge, not more refinement of manners, not more of the comforts of life, but it is more godliness, more truthfulness, more honesty, more charity, more self-sacrifice and self-restraint. If the next generation is to be any improvement on the present, our sons and daughters must be taught in ways of wisdom and led in right paths. Can a child come to mature years with a better possession than a character fixed in rectitude and radiant with goodness ? Bartlett. — Life means not merely passing through the world with a fair measure of comforts, with enough bread for our hunger, with enough raiment to keep us warm. Life means growth into the image of Christ Himself, into strong, well-rounded character, into disciplined manhood and womanhood, into the blessed peace of God. J. R. M.

14, 15. Many counsels of similar import are found in the New Testament, but none so specific, comprehensive, or sharply defined as this. Assuming the figurative supposition that there are but two paths of human life, a good and, therefore, right one, and an evil and, therefore, wrong one, the injunction is first general, *not* to enter the wrong, and next more definite and positive, to *avoid* it, or if it should happen to be touched at any point, not to pass a step upon it, but instantly to turn again and return to the right way. A main point to be noticed is the particularity and rigidity of the rule, its absolutely uncompromising character and unlimited extent. It applies to all forms and degrees of evil-doing. No matter how comparatively great or small the sin may be, it admits of no yielding. It allows not a step to be taken in the path of evil, but imperatively exacts entire forbearance, or the instant withdrawal from every sinful practice. This principle and this alone is the necessary rule of safety and usefulness. He only who practises this entire avoidance, this unqualified abstinence, this unyielding rejection of every evil practice can hope to stand safely, securely. B.

In his intelligence man possesses an instrument capable of appropriating the secrets of universal knowledge ; in his free-will, the power of being holy as God is holy, and of becoming, by that means, the agent of His omnipotent will. But this aim, so far above him, is still for him lost in the dim distance. In order to reach it it is necessary that man should surrender himself ; and in order to surrender himself he must be his own master, and, first of all, he must conquer himself. But what is the enemy he has to conquer ? The common notion is that the obstacle in the way of our self-government

is the authority of a master, who imposes his laws upon us ; and that is why man makes efforts to get rid of or, at all events, to draw his attention away from the thought of God. This is the deepest of delusions. The danger which threatens our liberty is much more truly the power of our lower nature, of our sensual appetites, of our instinctive tastes. Here is the true enemy of our liberty, which we must overcome for ourselves by a series of victories, of which each one is an act of self-denial. Let the natural inclination cause the spring of the will to give way for a moment under its pressure, and there is an end of liberty ; man is no longer his own master, he becomes, like an animal, the slave of nature. *Godet.*

Whence is it that temptation is so generally prevailing, so mightily prosperous in its operation ? Why does not the soul meet it, as water meets fire ? The fearful cause is that it acts on a nature congenial and accordant to what it offers. It is fuel that meets fire ! Let suspicion and alarm be awakened, when we find our minds at work to make out anything to be innocent against doubt and uneasy conscience. Be careful that when unquestionable duty leads into the way of temptation we stay not longer near the temptation than we are honestly about the duty. Beware of the kind of companionship that directly leads into temptation. But let no man be beguiled to think he is safe against temptation at the times when his only companion is himself. The whole tempting world may then come to him through the medium of the imagination. The great deep of his own evil heart may then be broken up. *Foster.*

The beginnings of evil are dangerous. They are like the letting out of water—the little stream soon becomes a tumultuous flood. Young men are first drawn to evil by the cords of their vanity ; these cords of vanity are tender, attenuated threads of weakness, but they soon grow into strong twisted cables. Chains of habit are soon formed which no agonistic effort can break. The imminent and special peril of young men lies in the fact that they are at the age when the imagination is most active. Unsobered by experience and unrestrained by judgment, they never dream of peril ; so they dally with evil, touch the outer circle of the vortex of vice, and begin with only slight and occasional indulgences. But the threads wrap them round and round. An infant could break them at first, but they grow thicker and thicker. Little by little the passion takes on its strength. Bid the passion cease at first, and we are its mas-

ter ; but yield, and it bids us cease our upbraidings, at last, with an imperious voice. Restless grows the spirit of vice unless we have bidden it depart before its tiny strands have become cables of desire. The man becomes the helpless slave of the spirit within him. The same is true, no matter what the form of vice. Every enjoyment of vice is the beginning of a reign of passion, the very dawnings of evil pictured in the imagination may prove the beginnings of the bondage of vice. Then beware of the evil beginnings that make the soul the home of unclean thoughts. Beware of evil books, of the glittering attractions of evil resorts, of subtle vice, of the invisible waves of evil ever beating around us. *H. Johnson.*

Every commission of sin imprints upon the soul further disposition and proneness to sin ; every one is both a preparative and a step to the next. When the soul is beaten from its first station, and the mounds and outworks of virtue are once broken down, it becomes quite another thing from what it was before. One visit is enough to begin an acquaintance, and this point is gained by it, that when the visitant comes again he is no more a stranger. *South.*—Sin is of an encroaching nature ; it creeps on the soul by degrees, step by step, till it hath the soul to the very height of sin. The little thief will open the door and make a way for the greater, and the little wedge knocked in will make way for the greater. Satan will first draw thee to *sit* with the drunkard, then to *sip* with the drunkard, and then at last to be *drunk* with the drunkard. He will first draw thee to be unclean in thy thoughts, then unclean in thy looks, then unclean in thy words, and at last to be unclean in thy practices. *T. Brooks.*

We become like the things we touch. We take the features of that we look upon. Witnessed vice makes us vicious ; depravity spreads. Vileness becomes less and less repulsive the more we look at it. “ Evil communications corrupt good manners.” An immense amount of adult depravity has its foundations laid for it in the child’s first years. The street is Satan’s nursery, and flashy literature his circulating library. It takes a great while to wear out a soul’s scar. Sin’s colors are put on with mordants. Parents are careful to keep their children away from diphtheria and small-pox ; sin is worse than scarlet-fever and more catching. Diseases are catching, health is not. Flowers die, weeds spread. Human nature is like water : it never runs without running down hill, and, left to itself, does not stop till it reaches the bottom. Thinking what is bad soils

the mind, breaks the edge of moral delicacy ; and it is all one whether the soiling thought is started by crime dramatized, indelicacy sculptured, indecency painted, or sin printed in a paper and called news. C. H. P.—Curiosity strangely moves us to disobedience in pursuit of pleasure. We thus intrude into things forbidden in various ways : in reading what we should not read, in hearing what we should not hear, in seeing what we should not see, in going into company where we should not go, in reasonings when we should have faith, in acting as if we were our own masters where we should obey. We indulge our reason, our passions, our vanity, our love of power ; we throw ourselves in the society of bad, worldly, or careless men. And all the while we think that, after having acquired this miserable knowledge of good and evil, we can return to our duty and continue where we left off. *Newman.*

Temptation is resistible at one time ; it is almost irresistible at another. Temptation when it first begins to act upon us may be overcome. He who, when an evil desire rises within him, flies at once to the throne of grace, who cries out to God to help him, will see his temptation fading away. But when we yield to the temptation, which so easily we might have resisted at first, then it gathers strength, and with each new indulgence its demands are more imperious, its fascinations more seductive, and its thrall more complete. W. P. Roberts.—You may fight hard against temptation, and fight victoriously. You may beat it off and crush it down ; and then, when weary with the conflict, you suffer the strain of vigilance to relax, it shall steal in and easily master the citadel which lately it spent all its force in vain to win. Beware of your best moments as well as your worst ; or rather, the moments which succeed the best. They are the most perilous of all. Just when the consciousness of a triumph seems to permit and justify disarmament for a moment, the subtle foe with whom you have to deal will steal in on you and win a treacherous victory. *J. B. Brown.*

Of nothing stand more in awe than of your own selves, and of the dread potentialities of evil no less than of good which you bear about with you. Believe me, there is no smallest spark from Satan's stithy which, if duly fanned, or even if left unquenched and not trodden out, might not increase into a flame, which should set on fire in you the whole course of nature ; even as in this material world there is in each tiniest spark a possible conflagration, such as should wrap whole forests or cities in a flame.

Resist evil at the beginning. Then it is weak and you are strong ; but after a little allowance the conditions will be reversed, and you will be weak and it strong. Stand in awe, I would say again, of your own selves. He knows very little of himself who does not know that as there is a possible heaven, so there is a possible hell within him. In the passing thought of impurity there is that which, being admitted, indulged, cherished, followed up whither it seeks to lead, would mould us at last into the hideous likeness of a Tiberius or a Louis XV. In the smallest act, word, or thought of genuine malice there is shut up a whole world of cruelty, of intensest delight in the suffering of others, such as a Domitian or an Eccelino never surpassed. *Trench.*

Sinful habits are fearful, fiery things. Ordinarily they are eternal ; it is rare that they are changed. And a single choice may become a habit, may take precedence in the whole character, and grow into a despotism that never can be broken. Most of those persons who perish through intemperance, forge in the fires of youth the first links of the dreadful chain that envelops them. The Latin maxim is full of wisdom, *obsta principiis*. Resist the beginnings. Let not the present pleasures or gratifications with which Satan, or your tempting companions, or your own ungoverned passions may allure you to evil, prevail with you to begin the dread habit of indulgence. Beware the first step of a habit, or if you have taken it, break from it before it becomes eternal. Break from it now, or it is *likely* to become eternal. Remember that the pleasure is only momentary ; the habit to which, for the pleasure, you sell your birthright is inveterate, and comes at last to be nothing but agony. *Cheever.* — Centres or centre-pieces of wood are put by builders under an arch of stone while it is in process of construction, till the key-stone is put in. Just such is the use that Satan makes of *pleasures to construct evil habits upon* ; the pleasure lasts, perhaps, till the habit is fully formed ; but, *that done, the structure may stand eternal. The pleasures are sent for firewood, and the hell burns in this life.* *Coleridge.*

A sense of danger is essential to safety in all the walks of life. "The way to be safe is never to be secure," said old Quarles. Safety is freedom from harm, while security is freedom from care. He who has a sense of insecurity and constant peril may be all the safer through the watchfulness that that sense engenders. On the other hand, "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." S. S. T.—A great

political thinker says, "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." The price of keeping the treasure that God has given us is the same. There are old legends of fabulous riches hid away in some rocky cave amongst the mountains, guarded by mythological creatures, of whom it is said that their eyes have no lids. They cannot shut them, and they never sleep. And that is what Christians need to be, with lidless, wide-opened, vigilant eyes, watching ever against the evils that are ever around us, and the robbers who are ever seeking to drag the precious deposit from our hands. Live to watch, and watch that you may live. *A. M.*

We have need not only to watch, but to keep up a strong habit of self-control. The current of our thoughts, the wandering of our imaginations, the tumult of our passions, the flashes of our temper, all the movements and energies of our moral being leave some mark, wither some springing grace, strengthen some struggling fault, decide some doubtful bias, aggravate some growing proneness, and always leave us other and worse than we were before. This is ever going on. By its own continual acting our fearful and wonderful inward nature is perpetually fixing its own character. It has a power of self-determination which, to those who give over watching and self-control, becomes soon unconscious, and at last involuntary. *Cardinal Manning.*—The will, which is the central force of character, must be trained to habits of decision, otherwise it will neither be able to resist evil nor to follow good. Decision gives the power of standing firmly, when to yield, however slightly, might be only the first step in a down-hill course. *Smiles.*

For one man that of set purpose and with deliberate conviction has done the wrong thing because he made up his mind to do it, there are hundreds that do it carelessly, unthinkingly, weakly—none the less sinfully; but oh! far the less manfully. For here is the manliness of manhood, that a man has a reason for what he does, and has a will in doing it. As the basis of all strong, noble, right life, I say to you, young men and women, have a will of your own about what you do and choose. Be the masters and lords of the circumstances in which you stand. Put your heel on temptations if they come to you. *A. M.*—Be not too slow in the breaking off a sinful custom. A quick, courageous resolution is better than a gradual deliberation. In such a combat he is the bravest soldier that lays about him without fear or wit. Wit pleads; fear disheartens; he that would kill Hydra had better strike off one neck than five

heads. Fell the tree, and the branches are soon cut off. *Quarles.*

True courage and seasonable boldness ever characterize the genuine soldier of heaven. In every occupation of life, in all intercourse, in toil and in recreation our Christian armor should be worn and never be laid aside. The moment our allegiance is tested, the moment that the world requires what God forbids or forbids what God requires, we must stand to our arms and admit no thought of a surrender. *Alford.*—The fiercest warfare between the flesh and the spirit is not known to the worldling, but the Christian. Men never realize the power of sin until they begin to resist it. You never know the force of a stream until you throw an obstruction across it. Battles more significant than Marathon or Gettysburg have been waged in souls like Paul's, Augustine's, Luther's, Bunyan's. The test of Christian character is not uninterrupted triumph, but honest and continual conflict. Christ has veterans in His army who have stumbled through their whole lives, but who have kept their faces set like steel Zionward, and who will yet wear the laurel-wreath in the everlasting kingdom. *J. H. Burrows.*

In the secret warfare which is going on within our hearts we can trust no foresight nor weapons but those which are God's. If we throw ourselves upon Him in watchfulness of prayer; if we acknowledge our manifold and secret dangers, and rely on Him to bless our continual resistance, we shall be safe; but if we forecast and resolve of ourselves, and determine that we will do or will not do such and such particular things, we shall find that we are fighting, like blind men, against sharp-sighted foes, dealing our blows where there are no enemies, and exposing ourselves at every instant to the most fatal and deadly assaults. It is in faith alone—the faith which, with watchfulness of prayer, relies on God—that we can safely take one step forward amid the various dangers, foreseen and unforeseen, which spring up at every instant around our path. *G. M.*

Watchfulness without prayer is presumption, and prayer without watchfulness is a mockery; by the first a man invades God's part in this great work, and by the latter he neglects his own. He who hopes to be delivered from temptation merely by praying against it affronts God, and deludes himself, and might to as much purpose fall asleep in the midst of his prayers as do nothing but sleep after them. *South.*—Watchfulness and prayer are inseparable. The one discerns dangers, the other arms against them. Watchfulness keeps us prayerful, and

prayerfulness keeps us watchful. To watch without praying is presumption, to pray without watching is hypocrisy. The eye that sees clearly the facts of life will turn upward from its scanning of the snares and traps, and will not look in vain. These two are the indispensable conditions of victorious encountering of temptation. Fortified by them, we shall not "enter into" it, though we pass through it. The outward trial will remain, but its power to lead us astray will vanish. It will still be danger or sorrow, but it will not be temptation; and we shall pass through it, as a sunbeam through foul air, untainted, and keeping heaven's radiance. A. M.

A final note upon the command of vs. 14, 15.

Every command, however strongly given, and whatever may be our inability to obey it, should rather encourage us than otherwise; for it never would have been left in the Bible if God were not ready to impart power to observe it to His glory. There is nothing laid down as a duty, but grace is promised to enable us to perform it. R. Hill.—This great ground-truth, so vital to Christian activity and hope, cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often. *Every demand of God*, whether to resist evil or to do good, to pray, to watch, to serve, and to endure carries with it a prophecy and pledge of a divinely assured fulfilment. B.

18. The path of the righteous is as the dawning light. Their way shines to themselves in the joy and comfort of it; it shines before others in the lustre and honor of it. They go on in their way with a holy security and serenity of mind as those that walk in the light. It is as the dawning light, which shines out of obscurity and puts an end to the works of darkness. It is a growing light, *that shineth more and more*, not like the light of a meteor, which soon disappears, or that of a candle, which burns dim and burns down, but like that of the rising sun, which goes forward and mounts upward *unto the perfect day*, until it reaches the brightness of meridian glory. Grace, the guide of this way, is growing; he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger; the joy which is the pleasure of this way, that honor which is the brightness of it, and all that happiness which is indeed its light shall be still increasing. H.—The Scripture is full of images and expressions which, like this, describe the believer's life as one of progress—progress in knowledge, holiness, and grace. There is in this life no standing still, no rest in present attainments or degree of progress—we

must go on, growing into greater conformity to the Divine image, until that day when our own race is run, and we awake *satisfied* with His likeness. Kitto.

There is no standing at a stay in religion, either we go forward or backward; if faith doth not grow, unbelief will; if heavenly mindedness doth not grow, covetousness will. A man that doth not increase his stock, diminisheth it; if you do not improve your stock of grace, your stock will decay. Watson.—Where there is life, real, spiritual life, there is progress in that life. A plant which makes no shoots or growth is dead or sickly. Even the tree which has reached its full height does not remain as it is, but constantly renews and varies its outward appearance. Thus it is with the kingdom of nature, and so it is with the kingdom of grace. "Be ye therefore renewed in the spirit of your minds." "Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." Salter.—It is the nature of seed to propagate itself, and spread its virtue into branches and fruit. It will be aspiring to that perfection which nature hath allotted to it. If you do not grow, it is a sign there is no life in you. It is but the counterfeit, not the reality, of the new creature. Living natures do thrive; pieces of art stand at a stay. He is no member of Christ, but as a wooden leg or arm; not knit by any vital band, but some extrinsic ligaments; not fed with the increases of God, because he doth not grow. To content ourselves with a low degree of grace makes us unworthy of the benefit of regeneration, and below those that pretend to a likeness to God. Charnock.

Many a time are we tempted to say, "I make no progress at all. It is only failure after failure. Nothing grows." Look at the sea when the flood is coming in, and you will think that the ceaseless flux and reflux is but retrogression equal to the advance. But look again in an hour's time, and the whole ocean has advanced. Every advance has been beyond the last, and every retrograde movement has been an imperceptible trifle less than the last. This is progress; to be estimated at the end of hours, not minutes. And this is Christian progress. Many a fluctuation—many a backward motion with a rush at times so vehement that all seems lost; but if the eternal work be real, every failure has been a real gain, and the next does not carry us so far back as we were before. Every advance is a real gain, and part of it is never lost. Both when we advance and when we fail, we gain. We are nearer to God than we were. The flood of spirit-life has carried us up

higher on the everlasting shores, where the waves of life beat no more, and its fluctuations end, and all is safe at last. F. W. R.

Men do not fly up mountains ; they go up slowly, step by step. True Christian life is always mountain-climbing. Heaven is above us, and ever keeps above us. It never gets easy to go heavenward. No one leaps to sainthood at a bound. Nobody gets the victory once for all over his faults and sins. It is a struggle of years, and every day must have its victories. Yet while we cannot expect to reach the radiant mountain-summit at one bound, we certainly ought to be climbing at least step by step. Higher and higher should be our unresting aim and endeavor. J. R. M.—The very characteristic of the Christian conception of “growth in grace” is the indefinite approximation to an infinite perfection. The type for us is the express image of God, the complete man, Jesus Christ. To that supreme beauty our nature is capable of unlimited approach. No man knows how much of goodness, nobleness, and wisdom are possible for any man, or for himself. No bounds can be set to that progress of growth. A. M.—It is the will of God that he that hath “life eternal” should not only retain it, but have it “more abundantly ;” that he should keep continually “growing up into Christ in all things”—his path being “like the light of the morning, shining more and more unto the perfect day.” The spiritual day is not *meant* to have a night—hardly a meridian—for it is to run parallel with the days of eternity. Its glow and glory, its radiance and sunlight, may keep on increasing and augmenting to the last, and then be continued in the upper world. The “way” of God’s saints is “a way everlasting.” The water of which they drink is “living water,” and is intended to be within them as “a well,” or fountain, “springing up into everlasting life.” Binney.

When persons make still nearer and nearer approaches unto God, and as they draw nearer to Him find a gradual influence of Divine light and life and power ; grow more and more into suitableness to Him ; are more acquainted with Him, are brought into higher delectations and to take more complacency in Him—this is walking in the Spirit ; when a man’s path, as it is said concerning the righteous man, is as the shining light that shines more and more, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day. As you know, the nearer approach we make unto the light of a glorious lucid object, the more light we have, still all along as we go our way grows more and more lightsome. *They* do not walk in the

Spirit, therefore, who keep moving in a circle or in a round of empty, sapless duties, who keep up the formalities of religion and no more ; but *they* walk in the Spirit who make a progress, who go forward, who draw nearer and nearer unto God, and become more suitable to and like Him, more fit for present service, and for His eternal converse. *Salter*, 1840.—The obedient and the men of practice are those sons of light that shall outgrow all their doubts and ignorances, that shall ride upon these clouds, and triumph over their present imperfections till persuasion pass into knowledge, and knowledge advance into assurance, and all come at length to be completed in the beatific vision. And where a long course of piety and close communion with God has purged the heart, and rectified the will, and made all things ready for the reception of God’s Spirit, knowledge will break in upon such a soul, like the sun shining in his full might, with such a victorious light that nothing shall be able to resist it. *South*.

Whoever turns to the love of God in Christ, and yields in the inmost part of his being to the power of His grace, is already “light in the Lord.” The true home and affinities of his true self are in the kingdom of the light, and he is ready for his part in the inheritance, either here or yonder. True fitness will become more and more fit. We shall grow more and more capable of God. The measure of our capacity is the measure of our possession, and the measure in which we have become light is the measure of our capacity for the light. A. M.—The life of those who love God is, when it develops itself harmoniously, still always like the rising sun. It is a life of constantly *increasing light* in regard to God and Divine things, and also in regard to ourselves and all that here surrounds us. Continually *increasing joy* also is the portion of those who love God. From His presence pain flees away ; there death expires, there life breaks forth like a flower from its bud, and the prophetic word goes constantly into broader fulfilment : “Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.” So, too, love leads us to a *fairer hope* ; for love is life, and life for the finite creature grows and increases, and takes firmer root in the eternal, invisible source of life. Nay, here the boldest image becomes too weak ; the sun in the region of nature passes from mid-day height to evening setting ; in the life of those who love God there can be no mention of sunset ; death is but the passage to the light of an eternal morning. *Van O*.

In the sphere of Christian faith the reality of a blessed future can never be a subject of doubt.

One needs to have taken only the first steps in this holy sphere to become aware how here all paths run toward a goal which shines alluringly from the world beyond ; how all is only a beginning that points to a future consummation. A time is to come when everything incomplete shall attain a perfection, and every fragment appear as a beautiful whole ; when every discord shall be resolved into harmony, and every hidden glory be revealed ; when every holy desire find full satisfaction. *J. Muller.*—Yes ! the path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day. It is imperfect now and often stormy and cloudy, but through the storm and the sunshine the path runs on. The beings toiling in it are not such in appearance as you would think destined to thrones of glory ; they look rather like weather-beaten mariners, poor, way-worn pilgrims, with garments worn and dusty ; but they are all to be presented without spot before the throne of God. They are all to be kings and priests. They are all to shine as the stars. Light, knowledge, sanctification, all things in the Christian life, all in the progress to glory, are gradual and partial now, entire and perfect hereafter. It is a toilsome, craggy way now, sometimes winding through places like the valley of the shadow of death, but nevertheless rising and, on the whole, growing brighter and brighter, until it shall end in the perfect day. *G. B. C.*

Light, pure, rich, varied, dazzling shines forth from the heavens by day and by night, just as the light of the Christian's example is to be poured on the darkness of the world. It shines not indeed for display, but for use ; not for its own glory, but like the light that should radiate from the Christian's life, to illustrate the glory of the great Creator. And if Christian light does not shine forth in the life, we have the highest evidence that it has never been enkindled in the bosom. *Barnes.*—The simple power of goodness and uprightness flows out as an emanation on all around. The good man shines like the sun, not because he purposes to shine, but because he is full of light. The bad man is rebuked, the good man strengthened by his example ; everything evil and ungraceful is ashamed before him, everything right and lovely is made stronger and lovelier. *H. B.*—A living Christian out among men in daily employment is an incessant fountain of Gospel light. He preaches all the time. A formal discourse is but for a half hour. A Christian life lived out among men is all of it text, argument, and application, and never lets go. It is an in-

cessant sermon. It accumulates effects and adds results together. *C. H. P.*

Since we are, one and all, in the number of those to whom God has said, "Arise, shine, for thy light has come," let us take care that we *do* shine ; that we keep our souls, like a clear mirror, free from the mists and stains of earth, which would otherwise dim the glorious image of the Son of God, offering Himself to be reflected in them continually. And let us do our work swiftly and clearly, but as silently as possible ; after the manner of rays of light, which come from the sun in silence, with inconceivable speed, straight to the point where God intends them to fall. Such should our work be ; no noise, no disturbance, no loitering about other and meaner things. *Keble.*

19. Here *thick darkness* is contrasted with the *light* of the preceding verse. In such a darkness no one can know on what he may stumble. In other words, "They are surrounded with darkness, which exposes them to continual danger of stumbling to their ruin." *M. S.*—We have the heavenly assurance that the path of the just is to shine more and more unto the perfect day. But this blessed truth involves its opposite, that the path of the wicked must grow darker and darker unto the total night, unless he give heed to the voice which calls him out of his darkness, and turn to the light, which is ever striving to illumine it. *Hare.*—This is an apt figure for every misspent life. It sets forth in a very striking manner the growing wretchedness and ruin induced by evil habits, the loss of reputation, of domestic comfort, of health, of peace of mind, of property, of life, of the immortal soul, sinking deeper and deeper down until the miserable victim makes the final plunge into the blackness of everlasting woe. *W. H. G.*

20-22. Solomon, having warned us not to do evil, here teaches us how to do well. It is not enough for us to shun the occasions of sin, but we must study the methods of duty. We must have a continual regard to the Word of God, and endeavor that it may be always ready to us. The sayings of wisdom must be our monitors to warn us of duty and danger. We must lodge them within us as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man—"Keep them in the midst of thine heart, as things dear to thee, and which thou art afraid of losing." Let the Word of God be written in the heart, and that which is written there will remain. *H.*

21. Men will spend hours in hearing and not one minute in serious reflections ; as if the Word

in their ears could cure the disease in the heart. This is the worm at the root of all our spiritual advantages. The soil must be made tenacious of the seed by the harrow of meditation, which hides it in the heart and covers it with earth ; for want of being laid deep and banded by serious meditation the seed takes no root, because there is not much earth about it. *Charnock*. — Translate the sense of Scripture into your lives, and expound the Word of God by your works. Interpret it by your feet and teach it by your fingers—that is, let your walkings and your workings be Scripture explications *Caryl*.

23. Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life. Watch thy heart more than all other things that are to be kept, because out of it flow the streams of thy life. The terseness of the Hebrew tongue enabled them to say, “ Watch thy heart above all keeping, for from it are the outflowings of life.” The heart seems to be thought of as a fountain from which flow out all the streams that make up the weal or woe of human life. Since man has the making and the guarding of his own life-fountain put under his own charge, it behooves him to account it his first duty to keep it well. This life-fountain is the heart, the moral heart, out of which, says our Divine Lord, “ proceed those things that defile the man—evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theft, false witness, blasphemies.” Out of this come also the genial sympathies, the love and the friendship, the sweet charities that perpetually react to bless their authors and givers. But, above all, let it be considered that with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; from the heart men repent with repentance never to be repented of ; the love of the heart is the fulfilling of God’s great law, and brings the soul into sympathy with heaven. Verily, there is infinite reason for keeping the heart with all diligence, since out of it flow such issues of life. H. C.

The heart, as the central organ of the circulation of the blood, forms the focus of the life of the *body*. It is also the centre of all *spiritual* functions. Everything spiritual, whether belonging to the intellectual, moral, or pathological sphere, is appropriated and assimilated by man in the heart as a common meeting-place, and is again set in circulation from the heart ; so that all vital motions of the soul proceed from the heart and react upon it. Now, because the heart is the central point of the person’s life, the work-place for the personal appropriation and assimilation of everything spiritual, the *moral*

and *religious* condition of man lies in the heart. Only what enters the heart possesses moral worth, and only what comes from the heart is a moral product. A man’s whole life as an individual, as well as all his separate personal acts, derive their character and moral significance from the quality and contents of the heart. Because of this man is characterized by his *heart* in all his habitual and moral attributes. We read of a wise heart, of a pure heart, of an honest and righteous heart ; and so, on the other hand, of a perverse heart, of a wicked and stubborn heart, and of a haughty heart. Also on man’s side the process of salvation begins in the heart. *Faith*, in which man’s personal life in its deepest basis takes a new direction, belongs entirely to the sphere of the heart, and is described as a making fast, a making strong (Psalms 27 : 14 ; 31 : 25), a staying of the heart (compare especially Psalm 112 : 7) on that foundation which is God Himself (Psalm 73 : 26). O.

God, who gave us these souls, gave us a strict charge with them : Man, woman, *keep thy heart ; take heed to thy spirit* (Deut. 4 : 9). We must maintain a holy jealousy of ourselves, and set a strait guard upon all the avenues of the soul ; keep our hearts from doing hurt and getting hurt ; from being defiled by sin and disturbed by trouble ; keep them as our jewel, as our vineyard ; keep a conscience void of offence ; keep out bad thoughts ; keep up good thoughts ; keep the affections upon right objects and in due bounds. *Keep them with all keepings*, so the Word is ; there are many ways of keeping things—by care, by strength, by calling in help, and we must use them all in keeping our hearts ; and all little enough, so deceitful are they (Jer. 17 : 9). Or, *above all keepings* ; we must keep our hearts with more care and diligence than we keep anything else. We must keep our eyes (Job 31 : 1), keep our tongues (Psalm 34 : 13), keep our feet (Eccl. 5 : 1), but, above all, keep our hearts. Out of a heart well kept will flow living issues, good products, to the glory of God and the edification of others. All the actions of the life flow from the heart, and therefore keeping that is making the tree good and healing the springs. Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or uncomfortable, according as our hearts are kept or neglected. H.

The great trust which is committed to us all is ourselves. And in connection therewith we are responsible for two things : first, for the development of character ; and, second, for the exercise of capacity. We are responsible for the development of character. We have to cut off

and suppress, or, at least, to subordinate and regulate a great deal within us in order that the true self may rise into sovereign majesty and power. We have to cultivate shy graces, unwelcome duties, sides of our character which are not naturally prominent. The faults that we have are not to be cured simply by the repression of them, but by the cultivation of their opposites. All this is given to *us* to do, and nobody can do it for us. We are stewards of many things, but the most precious gift of which we are stewards is this awful nature of ours, with possibilities that tower heaven-high, and evils that go down to the depths of hell, shut up within the narrow room of our hearts. The man who has *himself* put into his own hands can never want a field for diligent cultivation. And we are responsible for the use of capacities. God gives these to us that we may by exercise strengthen them. And so your natural self is your charge. A. M.—Behind every wrong act, every neglected duty—the hasty word, the impatient gesture, the equivocating answer, the jealous cruelty, the reckless calumny, is yourself. Each came out of your whole character; not your temperament, or your constitution, or your provocation, but yourself. You say it was unconsidered; but it was you that did not consider. You say you did not think; but God made you a thinking creature, and your thinking faculty was not given you for great occasions, which are rare in any life, and are not what will fix your place when you give in your account. Trace the secret history of any of the great crimes which now so often disgrace the business world, and you find that he who is unjust in much was unjust first in that which is least. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.” Out of the one heart are the issues of life and death. F. D. H.

Inasmuch as the great issues of life are determined by the mastery of one set of principles over another, it is very important to seek the expulsion or entire suppression of latent evil tendencies by the careful nurture of tendencies of opposite character, for the strength of principles is in proportion to their exercise. In so far as tendencies to evil lie within us, we should avoid unnecessary exposure to influences that may draw them into activity; and, reversely, we should seek those conditions of life that will aid the development of the good. Chapman.—Heart and tongue must go together; word and work, lip and life, prayer and practice must echo to one another, or else thy prayers and thy soul will be lost together. T. Brooks.

Remember not only to keep your hearts when

you are praying and hearing, and when you are in holy duties, but when you are feasting and refreshing yourselves, when you are in your callings, when you are buying and selling. Caryl.

—Just as it is true that wherever two or three are met together in His name God is in the midst of them, so, if your heart be at one with His Spirit, you *may*, in the midst of worldly amusements—yet not without great danger, for you will have multiplied temptations—keep yourself unspotted from the world. F. W. R.

You wish to enrich and enlarge life, your business, your social enjoyments, your knowledge of literature, science and art. I appeal to your own common sense when I say, Then you must deepen your knowledge of God and your love to Jesus; you must meditate and pray more frequently; you must increase the motive power. *Keep the heart* with all diligence; keep it pure, unspotted from the world; keep it full; be filled with the Spirit, with love to God and man, with heavenward longings and with God-glorifying aims; keep it strong in ardent love and constant prayer, receiving strength by waiting on the Lord. Saphir.—Christianity, as a system of faith and duty, first of all seeks to purify the springs of action in the soul, and then to build it up in all the excellence of a graciously originated virtuousness of character. And this spiritual rectitude, which is itself the present realization of our salvation, though one and indivisible in its essence, is multiform in its manifestations, including all that is designated in the heart's conceptions as either true, or beautiful, or good. Its truth is essential and immanent; its dignity is but the expression of its worth, which itself harmonizes with righteousness of life and unspotted purity; and thus embodying and comprising all moral excellence, it compels the approval of men's moral consciousness. Curry.

Man's heart is like a millstone; pour in corn, and round it goes, bruising and grinding, and converting it into flour; whereas give it no corn, and then indeed the stone goes round, but only grinds itself away. Even so the heart of man requires to have always something to do; and happy is he who continually occupies it with good and holy thoughts, otherwise it may soon consume and waste itself by useless anxieties or wicked and carnal suggestions. Scrivener.—There are a thousand doors of access to the heart—conversation, books, incidents, means of grace, all the five senses; and passengers are busily thronging in and passing out at every door. Some of these passengers are bent on doing mischief, some on doing good,

and some are questionable ; some, though much fewer than is generally supposed, indifferent. Now will any precaution, short of watchfulness over the persons allowed to enter, avail to keep such a house in order ? To dismiss the figure, unless we keep a guard and narrow outlook upon our hearts, we may find at any moment that we have "entered into temptation"—that is, have entertained it with the will, that we are fairly launched on the slippery incline which leads, it may be, to a very grievous fall. E. M. G.

Many a city has been taken on its strongest side, which was counted so strong that no watch was kept, even as no danger was dreaded there. We think that we are not exposed to one particular form of temptation ; let none be too sure of this ; and in resisting one form of evil, never let us forget that there are others in the world. Fleshly sins may be watched against, and yet room be given in the heart for spiritual wickedness, pride, self-righteousness, and the like. The victories gained over the lusts of the flesh may minister to those subtler mischiefs of the spirit ; and our fate may be like that of the hero in the Maccabees, who was crushed by the falling elephant himself had slain. There is a white devil of spiritual pride as well as a black devil of fleshly lusts ; and if only Satan can ruin us, it is all the same to him by what engines he does it ; it is all the same to him whether we go down into hell as gross carnal sinners or as elated, self-righteous saints. Set a watch, therefore, all around your heart ; not on one side only, but on all ; for you can never be sure on which side temptation will assail. *Trench.*

24-27. "Froward" (v. 24) translates a Hebrew word which means deceitful, false, a mouth that speaketh lies, one that *distorts* the truth. "Perverse lips" are the same. Solomon exhorts the young to speak the simple truth, and never allow their lips to prevaricate, deceive, or in any wise to discolour the facts of the case. So the next verse beautifully conceives of the path of right and duty as straight, on a right line, not tortuous and zigzag. Let thine eye look ever straight onward, with no thought of deviation from simple uprightness. Ponder (in Hebrew, weigh)—*i.e.*, carefully consider the path of thy feet, that thy ways may be evermore on solid ground, firmly planted. Turn into no devious path, either to the right hand or to the left. Reject all thought of guile, mischief, wrong in any form. Are not these noble words of wisdom ? H. C.

The "issues" just spoken of are tracked to

their three outlets. Speech turned from its true purpose, the wandering eye that leads on to evil, action hasty and inconsiderate, are the natural results where we do not "above all keeping keep our heart." E. H. P.—Of the things from the heart that need to be put away, the first in the order of nature is the froward *mouth*. Words offer the first and readiest egress for evil. The next outlet from the fountain is by the *eyes*. The precept is quaint in its cast—"let thine eyes look right on"—and yet its meaning is not difficult. Let the heart's aim be simple and righteous. Both in appearance and in reality let your path be a straightforward one. The last of these issues is by the *feet*. Ponder, therefore, their path. The best time to ponder any path is not at the end, nor even at the middle, but at the beginning of it. The right place for weighing the worth of any course is on this side of its beginning. By the word of God paths and actions will be weighed in the judgment. By the word of God, therefore, let paths and actions, great or small, be pondered now. *Arnot.*

Do not rest upon external reformations, they will not hold ; there is no abiding, no advantage in such a work ; you think, when reprov'd, I will mend and set about the redress of some outward things ; but this is as good as to do nothing. To set the outward actions right, though with an honest intention, and not so to regard and find out the inward disorder of the heart, whence that in the actions flows, is but to be still putting the index of a clock right with your finger, while it is out of order within, which does no good. But a purified conscience, a soul renewed and refined in its temper and affections, will make things go right without, in all the duties and acts of our callings. L.

25. The rule of life, the comfort of life, the strength of life, the life of life, is first to have an object, and then to live up to that object steadily and unquestioningly. A distinct, sufficient purpose and a determined pursuit give reality to life and make the man. The primary thing is to have an object in life which will be worthy of our being, suited to our character, attractive to our tastes. For if it fail in any one of these three things it will not long be our goal. To fulfil these three conditions there can only be four things in which an object can be found—victory, usefulness, eternity, Christ. There are three snares which beset and entangle the feet of a man who has resolved to live for some great end. (1) Retrospection. Do not look back. Do not look back at past attainments, for they are nothing. Do not look back at old sins, for they are gone. The Christian religion is to cut

off the guilty past, and to separate a man from himself, and from his own history. (2) Introspection. Do not look in. A great many people waste a great deal of time to no profit, but rather to much discouragement, and much hindrance to their spiritual advancement by pulling their own hearts to pieces. (3) Circumspection. Do not look around at circumstances. They are mere accidents. Looking at the waves and listening to the wind, Peter sank. A wrestler must never let his eyes drop. A racer must never look away from the winning-post, nor the ploughman from the end of the furrow, nor the helmsman from his needle's point. Thousands of things are coming and going every day at our sides. But what are they all? They roll on the surface, but they cannot touch the deeper thing below. They dart, meteor-like, but my star is fixed. J. V.

Everything is education; the trains of thought you are indulging this hour; the society in which you will spend the evening; the conversations, walks, and incidents of to-morrow. And so it ought to be. We may thank the world for its infinite means of impression and excitement which keep our faculties awake and in action, while it is *our* important office to preside over that action and guide it to some Divine result. *Foster*.—The mind has its moral element, the society in which it lives; it has its nourishment, which it is constantly imbibing; the influences of the world and the lower nature, or those of the Spirit of God. One or other of these influences is always imperceptibly passing into the mind and effecting a gradual change. And the awful thought is that if the change is not for the better it must be for the worse; if the mind is not appropriating the higher, it must be appropriating the lower influences; if there is no growth in grace, there must be a growth in worldliness and sin. Strictly speaking, nothing is morally indifferent; every moral action leaves its impress

upon moral character. Our fireside conversations, our thoughts as we pass along the streets to our daily work, our spirit in the transaction of business, all have some amount, small though it be, of moral value; all are tending more or less remotely to form the character; amid all and through all we are either making spiritual progress or falling back from the mark. With what solemnity do these thoughts invest even the most trifling incidents of life! E. M. G.

26. Thy ways be established.

Men's thoughts are much according to their inclination; their discourse and their speeches according to their learning and infused opinions; but their deeds are as they have been accustomed; therefore there is no trusting to the force of Nature, nor to the bravery of words, except it be corroborate by custom. Therefore since custom is the principal magistrate of man's life, let men by all means endeavor to obtain good customs. *Bacon*.

27. Turn not to the right or left.

A man who has character enough to be strict—to live strictly up to his principles—is likely to be broad, catholic, and liberal in those principles; while a man who has not character enough to be strict in his conduct is likely to be narrow and ill-defined in his principles. True strictness is a sure sign of character; and no one can have character without having clearly defined principles. It takes character to be liberal; it takes character to be broad; it takes character to be strict. Little character is needed to be loose or to be narrow. If you would be a man of principle, see to it that one of your principles is to be strict in living up to your principles. H. C. T.

If there be a case in which we may believe that the blessing of a holy God is really resting upon the head of a sinful man, it is when a man is humbly and prayerfully striving amidst manifold trials and temptations to walk in the narrow way of eternal life without turning to the right hand or to the left! T. M.

CHAPTER V.

- 1 My son, attend unto my wisdom;
Incline thine ear to my understanding;
- 2 That thou mayest preserve discretion,
And that thy lips may keep knowledge.
- 3 For the lips of a strange woman drop honey,
And her mouth is smoother than oil;
- 4 But her latter end is bitter as wormwood,

- Sharp as a two-edged sword.
- 5 Her feet go down to death;
Her steps take hold on Sheol;
- 6 So that she findeth not the level path of life;
Her ways are unstable and she knoweth it not.
- 7 Now therefore, *my* sons, hearken unto me,
And depart not from the words of my mouth.

- 8 Remove thy way far from her,
And come not nigh the door of her house :
9 Lest thou give thine honour unto others,
And thy years unto the cruel :
10 Lest strangers be filled with thy strength ;
And thy labours *be* in the house of an alien ;
11 And thou mourn at thy latter end,
When thy flesh and thy body are consumed,
12 And say, How have I hated instruction,
And my heart despised reproof ;
13 Neither have I obeyed the voice of my teachers,
Nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me !
14 I was well nigh in all evil
In the midst of the congregation and assembly.
15 Drink waters out of thine own cistern,
And running waters out of thine own well.
16 Should thy springs be dispersed abroad,

- And rivers of water in the streets ?
17 Let them be for thyself alone,
And not for strangers with thee.
18 Let thy fountain be blessed ;
And rejoice in the wife of thy youth.
19 As a loving hind and a pleasant doe,
Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times ;
And be thou ravished always with her love.
20 For why shouldst thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman,
And embrace the bosom of a stranger ?
21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD,
And he maketh level all his paths.
22 His own iniquities shall take the wicked,
And he shall be holden with the cords of his sin.
23 He shall die for lack of instruction ;
And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

THIS is one connected discourse devoted to warning against adultery. It begins, as usual before, with summoning the disciple to hear attentively that he may learn discretion (vs. 1, 2). The strange woman beguiles by flattery ; but the sequel is bitter and destructive (vs. 3, 4). Her steps go down to Sheol ; and she conceals and renders doubtful the path of life (vs. 5, 6). Again a careful listening is demanded ; the disciple is urged to keep far from the way of the strange woman and from her habitation, lest he should be robbed of his property, he himself become a prey to the cruel, and all the fruits of his toil be seized by them (vs. 7-10). Bitter sorrow will follow his ruin, and much self-reproach will be uttered for not listening to teachers, and thus running into the greatest dangers (vs. 11-14). The young man is counselled to confine his enjoyments to their lawful and proper bounds ; within them he may find all needful satisfaction. And these enjoyments should be exclusively his ; while he should take pleasure in rendering happy the wife of his youth. Her love alone should allure him (vs. 15-19). He must not seek strangers ; for God looketh on all his doings and will duly weigh them (vs. 20, 21). The iniquities of the wicked will surely overtake them, and they shall die through their great folly in rejecting instructions (vs. 22, 23). The subject of this chapter has already been strikingly introduced in 2 : 16-22. The line of thought in both compositions must, of course, be for substance the same, inasmuch as both treat of one specific vice. But the *costume* of each is different. M. S.

9-11. His manly vigor lost ; his years cut short ; his money squandered, and himself at the mercy of the merciless—what is he but the wreck of what might have been a man ! H. C. —The lusts of uncleanness not only *war against the soul* which the sinner neglects and is in no care about, but they war against the body too, which he is so indulgent of and is in such care to please and pamper ; such deceitful, such foolish, such hurtful lusts are they. Those that give themselves to work uncleanness with greediness waste their strength, throw themselves into weakness, and often have their bodies filled with loathsome distempers by which they fall unpitied sacrifices to a cruel lust. H.

God has written His abhorrence of the sin of lewdness in the very laws of man's physical constitution. Human flesh is heir to no forms of disease more loathsome or more fatal than those which stand guard around this sin and visit their swift retribution on the guilty. Since repentance and reformation almost never intervene to arrest the career either of the lewd woman or of her associates in crime, their course leads not only to the grave but to the doom of the lost beyond. H. C.—This is the great turning question of life, Am I to be the body's ? or is the body to be mine, and mine for God ? and according as I answer that question I will be a glutton, a drunkard, an adulterer, or a servant of the Lord. Ah, how often is the young man tempted into sensuality by the words of his companions, "Come, let us see life !" But that is not life—that is death. Life is something higher, nobler, more glorious by far ; life is to

obey every word of God. To follow the mere body is to lead an existence lower than that of the animals, for their instincts regulate them ; but if man will not obey either reason or religion, there are no such instincts left to guide him. To follow the body is to be carnally-minded, and that is death. *W. M. Taylor.*

11-14. Think of the picture drawn here in colors so vivid ; the miserable youth dying of effete old age long years before his time ; looking in the agony of despair upon the flesh and the body which God made strong, but which his early vices have prematurely wasted ; and then in the bitterest remorse cursing himself for having recklessly spurned instruction and despised reproof ; tracing his inheritance of woe to its true cause in his own inexcusable folly, and giving free utterance to his self-reproach as if his last and only remaining duty to his race were to turn his miseries to some account for the warning of those who were now hearing such counsels as he had madly disregarded ! The last words of his confession go deep and give a yet darker shading to the life-scene. "I was in almost every kind of evil ;" for lewdness breaks down the human conscience and drives its victims into almost all possible sins ; and this too, not in secret only, but in public, despite of the virtuous sentiments of the good—"in the midst of the congregation and assembly."

15-19. In these verses the theme is one to commend God's holy institution of marriage, and to exhort the young man to be true to its vows. According to the Divine institution, live happily with one wife, and let her love to thee be as an overflowing fountain. *H. C.*—Figurative language is here employed to designate the demeanor of the young married man who desires to live chastely and innocently. The imagery is drawn from a well with a living spring which sends forth streams of water. *M. S.*—Nuptial love maketh mankind ; friendly love perfecteth it ; but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it. *Bacon.*

18. Rejoice in the wife of thy youth. It is not only feed and clothe her, and refrain from injuring her by word or deed. All this will not discharge a man's duty, nor satisfy a woman's heart. All the allusions to this relation in Scripture imply an ardent, joyful love. To it, though it lie far beneath heaven, yet to it, as the highest earthly thing, is compared the union of Christ and His redeemed Church. *Arnot.*

As there is a Divine idea to be fulfilled in the relations between parents and children which makes that relationship sacred, so there is a Di-

vine idea to be fulfilled in marriage, in all the offices of mutual love and service which it creates, and in all the happiness which it renders possible ; and therefore marriage is sacred too. In its form the seventh commandment only forbids acts which violate the idea on which it rests, but it requires for its true and perfect fulfilment the realization of the idea itself. The institution rests on the possibility of the absolute mutual surrender to each other of man and woman, a surrender in which nothing is reserved but loyalty to God and to those supreme moral duties which no human relationship can modify or disturb. By such a life will the true idea of marriage which underlies this commandment be fulfilled, and all peril of violating this particular precept be kept far away. *R. W. Dale.*

21. These expostulations are here squarely enforced by the highest and most commanding of all considerations, *the awful eye of God!* That eye which forever seeth in secret, from which no darkness can hide, which no unchaste deed or even thought can escape—*that eye is on thee*, and His pure mind pondereth all thy goings.

22. By a figure common as well as forcible, sin is personified and armed with power to seize and punish the guilty. His own iniquity shall seize upon the wicked man himself and bind him with its own cords. The executioner of justice will never be far away. Ye need not hope to avoid his eye or elude his grasp, for where the sin is there is the Nemesis, the avenger, to punish sin and to make escape utterly impossible ! *H. C.*

Transgression is not a transitory thing. The single act is soon done and over, but it leaves an influence behind which, like the adder's poison, may grow and operate and spread until it reaches the seat of life and triumphs in the ruin of its victim. No act of the will—it is an indestructible and fearful law of our being—ever passes away without leaving its mark upon the character. There is a double tendency in every voluntary determination — one to propagate itself, the other to weaken or support, according to its own moral quality, the general principle of virtue. Every sin, therefore, imparts a proclivity to other acts of the same sort, and disturbs and deranges at the same time the whole moral constitution : it tends to the formation of special habits, and to the superinducing of a general debility of principle which lays a man open to defeat from every species of temptation. *J. H. T.*—Sin is invariably followed by a deterioration of our moral and

spiritual nature. By repeated acts of transgression evil habits are invariably strengthened. Evil passions acquire constant accessions of energy if they are not controlled. By wrong-doing we become less able to discriminate between good and evil, and those forces of our nature which refuse to listen to the voice of duty are strengthened in their revolt; the sensibility of conscience is diminished, and the authority of conscience is impaired. In other words, the more we sin the harder it becomes to forsake sin. These laws are in a very true sense "self-acting." They are precisely analogous to the laws of our physical organization, and to the laws of the material universe, and to the laws which belong to the province of political economy and of sociology. "Defender or avenger they have none, and they need none." *R. W. Dale.*

In the text the results of sin are represented as taking place in the natural order of things. The sinner thinks that sin is over and gone when it is once committed. But wisdom says no! It has consequences from which he cannot escape; it throws its cords around him and takes hold of him so that he cannot get away. If you put a Divine punisher of sin out of sight, sin does the work of the executioner on the sinner. Each new sin is a new, ever-flowing source of corruption, and there is no limit to the issue of death. Under the law of reason and of God any appetite would be innocent and harmless; none of them would interfere with the claims of God or of man, of the soul or of the body; none would be clamorous for instantaneous gratification, nor stir up an agitation in the soul, nor demand to be gratified at the wrong time or in the wrong degree. And as if to prevent the formation of evil habits, God has made the pain and the shame and the loss from excess so obvious in the world that every new transgressor is forewarned by the shipwrecks of others if not by the voice of conscience. When now these barriers are passed which are placed in the way of sin by the law of God imprinted on human nature, law parts company with the sinner and turns into his enemy—not, indeed, into his enemy in *this* sense that it hands him over to hopeless punishment, but in *this* that it shows him by what he is *now* bringing on himself, what he will *one day* bring on himself, when all his powers of resistance to temptation are weakened and his leaning to unlawful pleasure has grown strong. For by yielding to sinful desire he changes the current of his thought, so that a new object seizes on the trains of thought and bends them from their old direction; he

discovers new facilities for indulgence and new ways of keeping it secret; he invents excuses for it, which rise in their sophistry and their wide-reaching extent until every pleasure, however base, could be justified on the same ground; he increases the strength of desire until it becomes his main purpose to live for its gratification—yes, when it has become so strong that its intensity has grown into an awful hunger, and when nature has become so blunt that all pleasure from it is killed out, desire rages still the more fiercely, and the aim now is to put an end to an ever-returning torment rather than to supply *new* pleasure to a sated soul. *T. D. W.*

There is more bitterness following upon sin's ending than ever there was sweetness flowing from sin's acting. You that see nothing but *well* in its commission will suffer nothing but *woe* in its conclusion. You that sin for your profits will never profit by your sins. *Dyer.*—The wages that sin bargains with the sinner are life, pleasure, and profit; but the wages it pays him with are death, torment, and destruction; he that would understand the falsehood and deceit of sin thoroughly must compare its promises and its payments together. *South.*—Sin has had its martyrs as well as godliness, who, in premature old age, have been made to possess the transgressions of their youth in all the bitter fruits of a body tortured with diseases and a spirit wounded with remorse. *R. Walker.*—The martyrs to vice far exceed the martyrs to virtue, both in endurance and in number. *Colton.*

In contending against sensual sins the main stress must be laid on the principle of exclusion—the absolute keeping away of bad suggestions and imagery from the mind. Once in the stain has struck on a substance so sensitive that, if not quite indelible, it is still terribly tenacious and terribly prolific of sorrow. It is here, with beginnings, that we all have chiefly to do, in ourselves and our children. Here, peculiarly, the battle is secret and invisible. Not much can be *said*, and so the more must be done by prayer and instantaneous self-command, expelling the first contamination and crying, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." Resolute avoidance, the shutting of the eyes and ears, and pressing on to known duty are the best security. One wrong companionship in childhood, one unprincipled servant or schoolmate, one Mephistopheles using the advantages of superior station or intellect, may spread a curse through the whole hidden history of fourscore

years. Next to bad companionship is a bad literature. The degeneracy of the public modesty in the reading allowed without stint to the young is a direct contradiction to both the profession and the fact of a progressive civilization. Books that are the products of a thoroughly unchristian social life, in both Europe and America, not only furnish the continual reading matter of the reckless and abandoned, but they stock the circulating libraries, and lie on the tables of the best-bred families, within reach of young persons from whose bodies and physical health every breath of outward malaria is warded off with incessant vigilance and at every cost. The harm falls just where the liability to harm is greatest—on the springs of thought, imagination, emotion, where no direct effort can meet it or detect its inroads. F. D. H.

Personal purity is a priceless possession. Self-respect crouches beneath the lash of a guilty conscience, and there is no lethean tide that can wash from the memory the accusing

lines. The warning finger which Solomon placed at the gateway of that downward course wherein he had suffered, and along which he had seen so many wrecks, is illuminated with a ghastly light that must attract every eye. The words of the wise man are repeated from a thousand startling echoes as the reverberations of the tragedy fall on every ear. “Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away,” are the warnings that wisdom utters to all who come near the seductive path. And the grave in a deep undertone repeats the solemn words. *N. C. Advocate*.—And shall it be nothing to thee, O young man, that God has set before thee a pathway of life along which in purity and innocence, in conjugal fidelity and mutual affection, thy fountain may be always blessed, and there shall be no bitterness in the end ; while, on the other hand, he paints to thee the strange woman as one whose feet go down to death, and whose steps take hold on hell, and who bequeathes to her victims only the bitterest remorse and the most relentless and inexorable doom ! H. C.

CHAPTER VI.

- 1 MY son, if thou art become surety for thy neighbour,
If thou hast stricken thy hands for a stranger,
- 2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth,
Thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.
- 3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself,
Seeing thou art come into the hand of thy neighbour ;
Go, humble thyself, and importune thy neighbour.
- 4 Give not sleep to thine eyes,
Nor slumber to thine eyelids.
- 5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter,
And as a bird from the hand of the fowler.
- 6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard ;
Consider her ways, and be wise :
- 7 Which having no chief,
Overseer, or ruler,
- 8 Provideth her meat in the summer,
And gathereth her food in the harvest.
- 9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard ?
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep ?
- 10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,

- A little folding of the hands to sleep :
- 11 So shall thy poverty come as a robber,
And thy want as an armed man.
- 12 A worthless person, a man of iniquity ;
He walketh with a froward mouth ;
- 13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet,
He maketh signs with his fingers ;
- 14 Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth evil continually ;
He soweth discord.
- 15 Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly ;
On a sudden shall he be broken, and that without remedy.
- 16 There be six things which the LORD hateth ;
Yea, seven which are an abomination unto him :
- 17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
And hands that shed innocent blood ;
- 18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,
Feet that be swift in running to mischief ;
- 19 A false witness that uttereth lies,
And he that soweth discord among brethren.

- 20 My son, keep the commandment of thy father,
And forsake not the law of thy mother :
- 21 Bind them continually upon thine heart,
Tie them about thy neck.
- 22 When thou walkest, it shall lead thee ;
When thou sleepest, it shall watch over thee ;
And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.
- 23 For the commandment is a lamp ; and the law is light ;
And reproofs of instruction are the way of life :
- 24 To keep thee from the evil woman,
From the flattery of the stranger's tongue.
- 25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart ;
Neither let her take thee with her eyelids.
- 26 For on account of a whorish woman *a man is brought* to a piece of bread :
And the adulteress hunteth for the precious life.
- 27 Can a man take fire in his bosom,
And his clothes not be burned ?
- 28 Or can one walk upon hot coals,
And his feet not be scorched ?
- 29 So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife ;
Whosoever toucheth her shall not be unpunished.
- 30 Men do not despise a thief, if he steal
To satisfy his soul when he is hungry
- 31 But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold ;
He shall give all the substance of his house.
- 32 He that committeth adultery with a woman
is void of understanding :
He doeth it that would destroy his own soul.
- 33 Wounds and dishonour shall he get
And his reproach shall not be wiped away.
- 34 For jealousy is the rage of a man ;
And he will not spare in the day of vengeance.
- 35 He will not regard any ransom ;
Neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

Vs. 1-19 are subdivided into four parts. The first treats of becoming surety for the debts of others ; the second, of idleness or sloth ; the third, of crafty deceit ; the fourth, of seven things which Jehovah hates.

1-5. Warning is given against becoming ensnared by pledges of surety, and advice to hasten an accommodation in relation to them, by earnest efforts, in order that the person pledged may escape being sold into slavery when he has no ability to redeem the pledge. M. S.—To be surety for another is equivalent in modern phrase to becoming his security or to undersigning his note or bond. “Striking hands” together was one Hebrew method of publicly assuming this responsibility. The second verse is generally supposed to continue the description of the case, so that the word “if” should be carried forward, thus : “If thou hast been ensnared with the words of thy mouth—*i.e.*, if thou hast orally given thy consent to assume this responsibility for another's debts.” The advice given in such a case follows in vs. 3-5. Nothing can be more clear than the doctrine of Solomon in regard to the practice of becoming security for another's debts. It appears in 11 : 15 : “He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it ; but he that hateth suretyships is sure ;” also 17 : 18 : “A man void of understanding striketh hands and becometh surety in the presence of his friend ;” again in 20 : 16, and the same in 27 : 13 : “Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a

pledge of him for a strange woman ;” see also 22 : 26, 27. The suretyship contemplated here should be broadly distinguished from either giving or lending to the poor for the supply of their immediate necessities. The latter duties are specially enjoined. H. C.

6-11. Solomon, in these verses, applies himself to the sluggard who loves his ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass, and in a particular manner is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is as sure a way to poverty, though not so short a way as rash suretyship. H.

The idler reasoned with and warned. The sluggard is one habitually lazy, who gives himself up to an easy, indolent life, and who will not labor. The reference to the ant implies this simple but conclusive argument. *Since these insects obey the imperfect instinct and impulse which God has given, how much more should man respond to the dictates of the nobler and better instructed mind!* We find many other lessons than this of industry in “the ways” of the ant, yet they all naturally and necessarily go together. As idleness leads to all the evils described in vs. 12-19, so industry includes all the excellences and advantages suggested in the following statements gathered from various sources.

“The ant has been famous from remote antiquity for industry, ingenuity, and economy, and for comprehension of the advantage to be derived from division and combination of

labor." "The researches of naturalists into the habits and pursuits of these wonderful little creatures enable us better to appreciate the fitness of the wise king's recommendation. Whether as masons, carpenters, or carvers of wood, they offer examples which the most ingenious of men cannot refuse to admire, and by which the wisest of men may be instructed."

"The Termites, or White Ants of tropical climates, although they are not true ants, but belong to another order of insects, the Neuroptera, so closely resemble the ants in their industry and social economy that they may be fairly cited as illustrating part of the habits here referred to." (*McCook*.)—"The elevation of their edifices is more than five hundred times the height of the builders. These nests are often twelve feet high, and have been seen as high as twenty feet, large enough to contain twelve men. They consist of an exterior shell, containing an interior apartment, in which are formed a vast number of chambers, galleries, and magazines. There is much in the internal economy and management of these insects not less worthy of admiration—their unwearied industry and indomitable perseverance; the arduous and sincere exertions of every individual for the common welfare; their well-regulated labor; the sagacious judgment with which they avail themselves of favoring circumstances." "Their uniform care and promptitude in improving every moment as it passes, the admirable order in which they proceed to the scene of action, the perfect harmony which reigns in their bands, furnish a striking example of industry and concord to the human family." "Unlike the bee, which, having found a store of sweet, will come and go for a whole week and never bring a solitary companion, the ant straightway goes for a troop to share the booty. Ancient writers, as well as modern, refer to the consideration these creatures show to each other." So they use their opportunities to *provide food in the harvest*. "In tropical countries, and particularly along the Mediterranean, where the ancient writers referred to were quite at home, ants laying up their winter stores are familiar sights. 'All summer long,' says Dr. Thompson, 'and especially in harvest, every denizen of their populous habitations is busy. As we walk or ride over the grassy plains, we notice paths leading in all directions from their subterranean granaries. Along these converging paths hurry thousands of ants, thickening inward, until it becomes an unbroken column of busy beings going in search of, or returning with their food for future need.'" All this

they do without "guide, overseer, or ruler." So do they rebuke those whom God has given reason and conscience, plain rules for right living, and human teachers and exemplars to remind and quicken to duty, who yet are heedless and neglectful in its discharge, or who work under compulsion of an overseeing employer. B.

7. No overseer or ruler. Modern science confirms the statement that ants conduct their industries and social economies without special overseers; neither have they rulers, for the so-called "queen" is not a sovereign. *McCook*.—When I began to employ workmen in this country, I soon found that without an overseer very little work would be done, and nothing as it should be. The workmen, every way unlike the ant, will not work at all unless kept to it and directed in it by an overseer, who is himself a perfect specimen of laziness. He does absolutely nothing but smoke his pipe, order this, scold that one, and discuss the how and the why with the men themselves, or with idle passers-by, who are strangely prone to enter earnestly into everybody's business but their own. This overseeing often costs more than the work overseen. Now the ants manage far better. Every one attends to his own business, and does it well. *Thompson*.

8. Gathereth food in the harvest. Dr. H. C. McCook, a careful and scientific investigator, gives one chapter in a published volume to a comparison of the statements of naturalists during the last hundred years with those of Solomon, Homer, Horace, Virgil, and other ancient writers. He shows "that Palestine and all the Mediterranean shore is inhabited by one or more species of *harvesting* ants; that the harvesting habit was observed by the Israelites very early, as is abundantly shown by quotations from the Talmud, into which the habit of these insects to store grain is introduced in connection with a question of casuistry gravely debated by learned rabbins. The truth is that Solomon had seen with a clear and accurate eye, and what he wrote has been confirmed by the *most modern* science. . . . Several species of true harvesting ants are found in the United States. The Occidental ant (*Pogonomyrmex occidentalis*) abounds from Dakota southward through Colorado; the agricultural ant (*P. barbatus*) is found in Texas and the Southwest, and the Florida harvester (*P. crudelis*) inhabits the Floridian peninsula." (See McCook's "Agricultural Ant of Texas," and "The Honey and Occident Ants.")

10, 11. V. 10 contains the reply of the slug-

gard to the stirring expostulation of the previous verse. He will have more self-indulgence, heedless of the consequences of folding the hands that ought to be actively used. Hence the warning that follows in vs. 11. Poverty and want *must* follow inaction, since bread is gotten only by labor. And against these grim, gaunt, armed assailants the nerveless, self-stripped man is utterly defenceless. B.

The sluggard sins against the very nature which God hath given him. For what are all the high powers and faculties with which we are endowed, but so many tokens that we were formed for active service? The sluggard sins against the manifest design of Providence. God hath indeed made a liberal provision for the supply of all our returning wants. The rough materials of all things necessary and convenient for the purposes of life are laid plentifully at our hands; but the skill and industry of the workmen must bring them into form and render them fit for use. "All things are full of labor." Who, then, art thou, O sluggard, to counteract the designs both of Nature and of Providence? *R. Walker.*—The human heart is like a millstone in a mill—when you put wheat under it, it turns and grinds and bruises the wheat to flour; if you put no wheat, it still grinds on, but then it is itself it grinds and wears away. So the human heart, unless it be occupied with some employment, leaves space for the devil, who wriggles himself in, and brings with him a whole host of evil thoughts, temptations, and tribulations, which grind out the heart. *Luther.*

God does not provide to encourage our sluggishness and shiftlessness. The sluggard is told to go to the ant and consider how she provides for her wants. God is not willing to provide for us unless we be willing to provide for ourselves. If we do all we can and then fail, He will provide in some way what we lack. A man may say that he has faith enough to believe that God will provide for him; but if his faith be of the sitting-still kind, he may sit still till he starves before God will be at the trouble to turn stones into bread that he may be fed. Let us be reasonable. *C. H. Wetherbee.*

There is a work for all of us. And there is especial work for each, work which I cannot do in a crowd, or as one of a mass, but as one man, acting singly, according to my own gifts and under a sense of my personal responsibility. There is, no doubt, associated work for me to do; I must do my work as part of the world's great whole, or as a member of some body. But I have a special work to do, as one indi-

vidual, who, by God's plan and appointment, has a separate position, separate responsibilities, and a separate work; if I do not do it, it must be left undone. No one of my fellows can do that special work for me which I have come into the world to do; he may do a higher work, a greater work, but he cannot do *my* work. I cannot hand my work over to him any more than I can hand over my responsibilities or my gifts. Nor can I delegate my work to any association of men, however well-ordered and powerful. They have their own work to do, and it may be a very noble one. But they cannot do my work for me. I must do it with these hands or with these lips which God has given me. I may do little or I may do much. That matters not. It must be my own work. And by doing my own work, poor as it may seem to some, I shall better fulfil God's end in making me what I am, and more truly glorify His name than if I were either going out of my own sphere to do the work of another, or calling in another into my sphere to do my proper work for me. *Ruskin.*

12-15. *Wickedness described and forewarned of its doom.* The connection of wickedness with idleness is natural. As industry with virtue, so slothful ease is allied with vice. The particulars here given read as if written of to-day, for the evil heart has always been the same in its nature and manifestations. Very striking is the illustration of v. 13. Although especially applicable to the Orientals, who are wonderfully expert in making communications by signs and gestures with eyes, hands, and feet, yet the fact is still common. Everywhere light-minded and evil-minded are addicted to the use of signs for words. They use the wink and the shrug, or some like method of conveying an insidious meaning, either disparaging or impure. And the vicious, too, are here faithfully forewarned of the *sudden remediless destruction* that *must* follow. B.

12, 13. The type of wickedness depicted here is that of guile, treachery, and secret combination. This wicked man artfully plots mischief in concert with his fellows, concealing his designs from his intended victims. The use of the feet as well as the fingers for secret communication reminds us that the Orientals had either a slight covering for the feet, or none; usually sandals when travelling, nothing at home. *H. C.*—All the modes of communication here described are characteristic of plotters and intriguers, who deal secretly in this way in order that their *words* may not be adduced in testimony against them. *M. S.*

16-19. *A fearful summary of evils in the*

heart and life is here added as if to expand and emphasize the warning just uttered. These are the hated things : pride or haughtiness, lying or fraudulence, guilt of blood, malicious scheming, calumny, and the sowing of discord among men.

B.—These vices are not only great sins in the sight of God, but they are manifestations of hatred to one's neighbor, and a violation of the second table of the Decalogue. They are intensified with a degree of falseness and malice that renders them destructive to human happiness, and hence objects of the abhorrence of a holy God, and deserving of His righteous judgments. *Clark*.—There is one parallel well worthy of notice between the seven cursed things here, and the seven blessed things in the fifth chapter of Matthew. In the Old Testament the things are set down in the sterner form of what the Lord hates, like the "thou shalt not" of the Decalogue. In the New Testament the form is in accordance with the gentleness of Christ. There we learn the good things that are blessed, and are left to gather thence the opposite evils that are cursed. But, making allowance for the difference in form, the first and the last of the seven are identical in the two lists. "The Lord hates a proud look," is precisely equivalent to "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" and "he that soweth discord among brethren," is the exact converse of the peacemaker. This coincidence must be designed. *Look, . . . tongue, . . . hands, etc.* These eyes, this tongue, these hands and feet are instruments of surpassing skill and beauty. They declare God's glory as articulately as the stars of heaven or the flowers of earth. Who shall dare to corrupt the allegiance of these tributaries and enroll them rebels against the King of kings? The Maker cares for all His works. To pervert any part of them provokes him to anger. Every purpose to which the members of our body are put is noticed by the All-seeing. *Arnot*.

16, 17. There are seven things that God hates, and pride is the first, because it is at the bottom of much sin and gives rise to it. God sees the pride in the heart and hates it there, but when it prevails to that degree that the show of men's countenance witnesses against them, that they overvalue themselves and undervalue all about them, this is in a special manner hateful to Him; for then pride is proud of itself and sets shame at defiance. H

18. The minds and hearts of men are continually minting and coining new thoughts and imaginations; the thinking faculty is always at work. To have all these thoughts, all the con-

ceptions that are framed and agitated in the mind, to be evil and that continually, what a hell of horror and confusion must it needs be! A deliverance from this loathsome, hateful state is more to be valued than the whole world. Without it neither life, nor peace, nor immortality, nor glory can ever be attained. There are but two ways of relief from them, the one respecting their moral evil, the other their natural abundance. The first is by throwing salt into the spring, as Elisha cured the waters of Jericho—that is, to get the heart and mind seasoned with grace; for the tree must be made good before the fruit will be so. The other is to turn their streams into new channels, putting new aims and ends upon them, fixing them on new objects; so shall we abound in spiritual thoughts; for abound in thoughts we shall, whether we will or no. *Owen*.

19. It will be acknowledged even by those that practise it not, that clean and round dealing is the honor of man's nature, and that mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it. There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious. *Bacon*.—If it be well weighed, to say that a man lieth is as much as to say that he is brave toward God and a coward toward men. For a lie faces God and shrinks from man. *Montaigne*.

Do you think of one falsity as harmless and another as slight, and another as unintended? Cast them aside; they may be slight and accidental, but they are ugly soot from the smoke of the pit for all that. *Ruskin*.—For God's sake, for the sake of Christ, who was full of grace and truth, strive against the temptation to untruthfulness. For God is a God of truth, and no liar shall stand in His sight, let him be never so religious in appearance; He requires truth in the inward parts and truth He *will* have. *Kingsley*:

Soweth discord. Making mischief between relations and neighbors, and using all wicked means possible not only to alienate their affections one from another, but to irritate their passions one against another. The God of love and peace hates *him that sows discord among brethren*, for He delights in concord. Those that by tale-bearing and slandering, by carrying ill-natured stories, aggravating everything that is said and done, and suggesting jealousies and evil surmises, blow the coals of contention, are but preparing for themselves a fire of the same nature. H.

20-22. *God Himself, by His Word and Spirit.*

guides, preserves, and communes with the obedient heart. This cheering truth is conveyed under the form of exhortation and promise. A father's commandment and a mother's law are here assumed to be identical in their teaching and effects with the law of God. It is implied that both are filled and controlled by the indwelling Word, and that they faithfully instil its blessed truths and promises into the hearts of their children. The assumption is a beautiful tribute to the fact and the force of parental faithfulness, and it is an impressive method of bringing the worth and excellence of God's Word to the heart of children. B.

21. The instructions and admonitions of faithful parents, carried out in life, are compared to wreaths, tiaras, and necklaces, which are very generally worn in the East by both sexes, but particularly by females, as ornamental decorations of the head and neck. These ornaments, by imparting elegance and gracefulness to the human form, gave additional charm and attractiveness to those that wore them. In like manner those who exhibit in their disposition and deportment the virtues which characterize the pious and the good are thereby rendered morally beautiful and lovely, both in the sight of God and man. To adorn the person with extrinsic ornaments appears to be an instinct of humanity. The natural fondness for personal ornaments and decorations, however, is often indulged in to excess. Against this excessive and criminal indulgence the instructions of the New Testament are frequently directed. Ornaments are, however, alluded to in this passage neither for the purpose of approving nor of condemning them, but merely to indicate that moral qualities are really and emphatically the true adornments of a rational and immortal being. *Muenschel.*

22. A comprehensive and beautiful impersonation of the blessed effects of the Word of God upon the daily life of one who heartily accepts its principles and obeys its precepts. These effects are threefold. In the activities of life it will impart healthful motive and stimulus, to the plans of toil it will lend helpful suggestion, and in unforeseen vicissitudes and trying emergencies it will give light and deliverance. Over the approaches of slumber it will shed the calming consciousness of a Divine protection and breathe the benison of God's peace. And in the wakeful intervals of rest from toil, the briefer periods of quiet thoughtfulness, its precious truths and promises will bring Christ Himself their living source as a personal presence, and rejoice the trusting heart with a sense of

His actual fellowship and communion. Beautiful and blessed indeed are these effects of *the indwelling Word of Christ!* B.

"When thou goest it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou wakest it shall talk with thee." Has this ever been said of any other book? No. Such a statement in regard to the greatest works of human genius would transcend the limits of poetic hyperbole and be read with derision. But we do not smile at what Jesus said and what Peter and Solomon wrote about the Bible. We feel that they call our attention to a great and glorious fact. We have in the accumulated literature of the ages one book that is not mere parchment or paper, that is not mere words that men have written or printed, but is instinct with life. It is what the Spirit is saying now. And so whenever any man at any time or place opens the Bible at any chapter and verse and reads, God says to him, as with a loving voice, the very words that he reads. If we had this faith in the Word, we would never leave our homes in the morning without taking with us in our memories and our hearts passages of Scripture to caution, comfort, and direct us through the day. We would be meditating on this Divine truth as we walked the streets, and our minds would recur to it during the intervals of our daily duties. And when we came home at night we would say, I must hunt up sweet promises in the Bible to pillow my head upon. *Interior.*

23. Christ's Word is sanctifying. If you get to love and revere it so as to exalt it into a companion and counsellor, it will tell on all your conduct. Like a lamp it will reveal what is wrong in your character and motives, your temper and spirit, and be the great help to self-examination; but better than a lamp, like a wise and loving friend it will show the excellence of holiness and set you on the way to attaining it. Christ's Word is sustaining. Daily work needs daily bread, and it is in the Bible-magazine that the bread of life is stored. And just as the man who wishes strength for labor would deem it false economy to save his time and take no food, so theirs is foolish haste who think to struggle on from day to day without the Spirit's bread. It is through the Word and prayer that we receive into our souls the energy of God, and import into common toils and daily drudgery the freshness and the zest of heaven. *Hamilton.*

The Word of God is the light by which we ought to be guided. Nothing grievous can ever happen to us so long as we follow it. When

we walk without light in the night of our evil will we cannot avoid either stumbling or going astray. Let Thy Word, O Lord, be always the lamp which may enlighten my steps, and the light which may direct me in Thy ways. *Quesnel*.—An unreflecting Christian walks in twilight among snares and pitfalls. He entreats the Heavenly Father not to lead him into temptation, and yet places himself on the very edge of it, because he will not kindle the torch which his Father had given into his hands as a means of prevention. *Coleridge*.—Though the Word of God itself is the lamp, reflection must, nevertheless, bear it into the depths of human experience in order to bring out its illuminating power. Doctrines held by reflection, in contact with practical experience, come forth pulsating with life, instinct with practical power, glowing evangelists, speaking as with tongues of fire; and promises which, perchance, had seemed meant for some ideal millennial realm, pour out their sweetness for our work-day lives, and shed their healing on our world-worn feet. V.

In this great matter of the life of godliness, in all its various aspects, we have one teacher—the written Word of God; we have in that the one common originator of its fundamental principles, and the one ever fresh and adequate educator of all its remote developments. If we look at this Word we are struck with this fact, and the more we enter into it the more we feel it. Godliness for those who have this Word is no vague sentiment or emotional feeling toward the unknown. It is a life in relation to a God who has revealed Himself, and a God who has engaged Himself. It rests upon revelation, it lives in a covenant; and, to sum up the whole (in what I believe to be chronologically the final words of Holy Scripture, the last words of the last apostle), it rests upon this: “We know that the Son of God is come;” and the next step: “That He hath given us an understanding that we might know Him that is true;” and then the last step: “That we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ.” This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” Resting, then, upon this grand revelation and the covenant that springs out of it, the life of godliness develops itself; and in using the Word of God as the educator of spiritual life, you find that it is effectual for the development of any special form of it, and secures at the same time its completeness as a whole. *T. D. Bernard*.

A few simple sentences would have sufficed to tell what God is, and what He would have

us to do. There was no need of the picturesque narrative and the majestic poem, no need of the proverb, the story, and the psalm. A chapter of theology and another of morals, a short account of the Incarnation and the great Atonement, and a few pages of rules and directions for the Christian life, might have contained the vital essence of Scripture, and have supplied us with a Bible of simplest meaning and smallest size. And in that case the Bible would have been consulted only by those rare and wistful spirits to whom the great hereafter is a subject of anxiety, who are really anxious to know what God is, and how they themselves may please Him. But in giving that Bible its Divine Author had regard to the mind of man. Therefore He made the Bible not only an instructive book, but an attractive one—not only true, but enticing. He filled it with marvellous incident and engaging history; with sunny pictures from old-world scenery and affecting anecdotes from the patriarch times. He replenished it with stately argument and thrilling verse, and sprinkled it over with sententious wisdom and proverbial pungency. He made it a book of lofty thoughts and noble images, a book of heavenly doctrine, but withal of earthly adaptation. In preparing a guide for immortality Infinite Wisdom gave not a dictionary nor a grammar, but a Bible, a book which in trying to reach the heart of man should captivate his taste, and which in transforming his affections should also expand his intellect. The pearl is of great price; but even the casket is of exquisite beauty. The sword is of ethereal temper, and nothing cuts so keen as its double edge; but there are jewels on the hilt, an exquisite inlaying on the scabbard. The shekels are of the purest ore; but even the scrip which contains them is of a texture more curious than any which the artists of earth can fashion. The apples are gold; but even the basket is silver. *Hamilton*.

The Bible has lessons for all conditions: it brings upon the scene both the lowly and the great; it reveals equally to both the love of God, and unveils in both the same miseries. It addresses itself to children; and it is often children that show us there the way to heaven and the great things of Jehovah. It addresses itself to shepherds and herdsmen—and it is often shepherds and herdsmen who lift up their voices there, and reveal to us the character of God. It speaks to kings and to scribes; and it is often kings and scribes that teach us there man's wretchedness, humiliation, confession, and prayer. *Gaussen*.—All that the true scientist

is doing is bringing forth things new and old, and his newest things are the oldest things of God's creation. It is his insight which has made all things new. And so no less it must be in spiritual things. Our new things must come out of our old ones. The deeper we are able to look into the heart of these things, the more fresh and blessed will they appear. The natural world is opening up every day, and we are getting new revelations out of old facts ; and surely this other world of spiritual truth is by no means exhausted. The Gospel is the essence of all science, the key of all history, the sum of all poetry, the interpretation of all life. And if it does not unfold for us day by day, if it ever grows tedious or old, it must be because we go through the world with blind eyes and dull hearts. *J. K. Allen.*

We treat God with irreverence by banishing Him from our thoughts, not by referring to His will on slight occasions. His is not the finite authority or intelligence, which is unwilling to be troubled with small things. There is nothing so small but that we may honor God by asking His guidance of it, or insult Him by taking it into our own hands. And what is true of the Deity is equally true of His Revelation. We use it most reverently when most habitually ; when its sacred words are made the ground of every argument and the test of every action. We have them not often enough on our lips, nor deeply enough in our memories, nor loyally enough in our lives. *Ruskin.*

24-29. Here is a particular caution against the sin of uncleanness. When we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the seeds of the spiritual life in the soul, we shall not wonder that the cautions against it are so often repeated, and so largely inculcated. *H.*

25. Beware of evil in the buddings of desire ! Whoever allow themselves to indulge in evil imaginations or thoughts, are preparing themselves to commit the crimes they fancy. Desires are the seed of deeds. Working in the dark, and all the more dangerous that their progress, like a miner's, is silent and unseen, they sap the walls of virtue ; and thus the man of God is overthrown by temptations that otherwise had broken on him, as breaks the mountain billow on a front of rock. May not the bad thoughts and fancies that do their work secretly and unsuspected within the recesses of the heart, account for those sudden falls and sins on the part of such good men as David, that neither

they nor others would have ever dreamt of ? The mischief is due less to the temptation than to what preceded it, and prepared for it. *Guthrie.*—Sensual acts when only imagined, when only thought about complacently, still are sins in the sight of God. It is well to think of this, both because we are apt to fancy that there can be no harm in anything that never goes beyond our own minds, and also because to cherish sin in the imagination is the natural preparation for committing sin in act. And once admitted to the imagination, sin gets a foothold which greatly facilitates its further inroads and its final triumph. *W. G. B.*

27-29. By these forcible figures the writer would show his youthful reader that he might as well take fire into his bosom, or walk with bare feet on burning coals and yet think to escape harm, as yield to the temptations to adultery, and yet escape just retribution for such sin. Let him not think of adultery as anything but guilt, crime, an outrage on most sacred rights—an abomination both to man and to God. *H. C.*—These words contain an important principle of general application to every sin—the impossibility for a man to play with the enticement to sin without falling a prey thereto. The truth of the statement will appear if we take into consideration the following things : That every temptation presented to man addresses itself to a nature that is already corrupt, and is therefore liable to take to it. That man in playing with the temptation puts himself directly in the way that leads naturally to the sin. That playing with the temptation to any evil shows some degree of bias in the nature to that particular evil. That playing with temptation brings man into contact with sin only on its pleasurable side, and thus gives it an advantage to make an impression favorable to itself on his mind. That man, through playing with temptation, weakens his moral power to resist the sin, and gradually gets so debilitated as to be too weak to oppose it. That man, by playing with temptation, at last tempts the Spirit of God to withdraw His protection from him, and to leave him to himself, and a prey to his lust. *O. Thomas.*

32, 33. No sin evinces greater folly and a more fatal lack of discretion, none other carries a more terrible ruin to one's own soul. His good name perishes ; his reproach no tears can wipe away. Who can ever trust the adulterous young man to regard any rights or interests of his fellow-beings of either sex ? How can he be thought of otherwise than as a reckless enemy of his race ? *H. C.*

CHAPTER VII.

- 1 My son, keep my words,
And lay up my commandments with thee.
- 2 Keep my commandments and live ;
And my law as the apple of thine eye.
- 3 Bind them upon thy fingers ;
Write them upon the table of thine heart.
- 4 Say unto wisdom, 'Thou art my sister ;
And call understanding *thy* kinswoman :
- 5 That they may keep thee from the strange
woman,
From the stranger which flattereth with her
words.
- 6 For at the window of my house
I looked forth through my lattice ;
- 7 And I beheld among the simple ones,
I discerned among the youths,
A young man void of understanding,
- 8 Passing through the street near her corner,
And he went the way to her house ;
- 9 In the twilight, in the evening of the day,
In the middle of the night and in the dark-
ness.
- 10 And, behold, there met him a woman
With the attire of an harlot, and wily of heart.
- 11 She is clamorous and wilful ;
Her feet abide not in her house :
- 12 Now she is in the streets, now in the broad
places,
And lieth in wait at every corner.
- 13 So she caught him, and kissed him,
And with an impudent face she said unto
him :
- 14 Sacrifices of peace offerings are with me ;
This day have I paid my vows.
- 15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee,
Diligently to seek thy face, and I have found
thee.
- 16 I have spread my couch with carpets of tap-
estry,
With striped cloths of the yarn of Egypt.
- 17 I have perfumed my bed
With myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
- 18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the
morning ;
Let us solace ourselves with loves.
- 19 For the goodman is not at home
He is gone a long journey :
- 20 He hath taken a bag of money with him ;
He will come home at the full moon.
- 21 With her much fair speech she causeth him
to yield,
With the flattering of her lips she forceth
him away.
- 22 He goeth after her straightway,
As an ox goeth to the slaughter,
Or as *one* in fetters to the correction of the
fool ;
- 23 Till an arrow strike through his liver ;
As a bird hasteth to the snare,
And knoweth not that it is for his life.
- 24 Now therefore, *my* sons, hearken unto me,
And attend to the words of my mouth.
- 25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways,
Go not astray in her paths.
- 26 For she hath cast down many wounded :
Yea, all her slain are a mighty host.
- 27 Her house is the way to Sheol,
Going down to the chambers of death.

IN chaps. 2, 5, and 6 the great danger to which the crime of adultery exposes one has been set forth in strong colors. The writer now proceeds, in the way of forewarning, to set forth the alluring and deceitful arts practised by the adulteress, in order to inveigle and mislead the unwary youth. Forewarned, forearmed. If he gives diligent heed to the words of the faithful monitor, he may learn to shun the ways of crime and destruction. As usual, at the outset he is exhorted to hearken and to impress deeply on his heart what is said (vs. 1-5). The remainder of the chapter is occupied with graphically describing the demeanor and actions of the adulteress. M. S.—To put the virtuous upon their guard, and to fill them with a just abhorrence of the ways of crime, he sketches a life-scene in which are traced, first, the young

man void of understanding, abroad in the dark night (vs. 8, 9) ; then a harlot and her vile seductions (vs. 10-20), and the sudden and fearful ruin in which she involves her victims (vs. 21-23) ; closing with renewed exhortations against being allured by one who has ruined her thousands and whose "house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death" (vs. 24-27). H. C.

1-4. The introduction to a yet more lifelike portrait of the harlot adulteress of an Eastern city, contrasted with the true feminine ideal of the wisdom who is to be the "sister" and "kinswoman" of the young man as he goes on his way through life. E. H. P.

2. My law as the apple of thine eye. No part of the body more precious, more tender, and more carefully guarded than the

eye ; and of the eye, no portion more peculiarly to be protected than the central apple, the pupil, or, as the Hebrew calls it, "the daughter of the eye." The all-wise Creator has placed the eye in a well-protected position, surrounded by projecting bones, with many tunics of inward covering, besides the hedge of the eyebrows, the curtain of the eyelids, and the fence of the eyelashes ; and, in addition to this, he has given to every man so high a value for his eyes, and so quick an apprehension of danger, that no member of the body is more faithfully cared for than the organ of sight. *Spurgeon.*

6-9. The first character appears on the scene, young, "simple," in the bad sense of the word ; *open* to all impressions of evil, empty-headed and empty-hearted ; lounging near the house of ill-repute, not as yet deliberately purposing to sin, but placing himself in the way of it, wandering idly to see one of whose beauty he had heard. And this at a time when the pure in heart would seek their home—literally, "in the cool, in the evening, in the eyeball of night (a bold expressive figure for its blackness), and in darkness." It is impossible not to see a certain symbolic meaning in this picture of the gathering gloom. Night is falling over the young man's life as the shadows deepen. *E. H. P.*

9. We learn from this the evil of late hours. The devil, like the beast of prey, stalks forth when the sun goes down. Midnight on earth is hell's midnight. *J. T. Davidson.*

14. The *offerings* here named are those of thanksgiving and joy on account of blessings received. Of such offerings the guests partook in part ; so that a rich feast is here virtually set before the simpleton under the garb of a religious usage. The pretence is that she had before bound herself by vows to make the offerings in question. This therefore is represented to be a lucky day for the invited guest. *M. S.*

26. The house of the harlot had been compared before (2 : 18) to the grave, to the world of the dead ; now it is likened to a field of battle strewn with the corpses of the slain. "Many strong men." The word speaks rather of the multitude than of the individual strength of those who have perished. "Mighty hosts are all they that have been slain by her." This is followed by a repetition of the old similitude from 2 : 18 ; 5 : 5. *E. H. P.*

27. Her house, though richly decked and furnished and called a *house of pleasure*, is the *way to hell* ; and her chambers are the staircase that goes down to the *chambers of death* and everlasting darkness. The cup of fornication

must shortly be exchanged for the cup of trembling ; and the flames of lust, if not quenched by repentance and mortification, will burn to the lowest hell. Therefore *stand in awe and sin not*. *H.*—Death, for the godless, is but the bond between past and future misery. The ungodly pass from the first death across to the second. *Gerhard.*

There *are* unseen, pitiless limits existing—walls of adamant, against which the waves of human passion and human folly dash, and break, and are shattered without mercy, even though every drop be a life, and every life be dashed to pieces in hopeless agony in the vain endeavor to go its own way, and set its own will as the judge what that way shall be. There is an eternal march of judgment, which they who choose can see. And calm, and clear, and pitiless on every side, amid the noise of ignorant self-will, the clash of blinded passion, and wisdom blinder still, the voiceless warning strikes upon the world ; and the great prison walls close in on those who will have it so. It may be said : "These are but words ; what proof is there of this invisible, everlasting wall of doom, and of the unseen executioners, God's secret police, that arrest the guilty and the careless, self-indulgent fools?" I answer : "Take any form of vice you like, give it power, give it wealth, and then—wait a few years and see what comes of it. Watch the curse day by day, and hour by hour, walking by the victim's side ; watch him dragged from bad to worse ; stand in his dreary home when the last scene comes—and doubt no more of God's great prison walls on earth." *E. Thring.*

God's Word has its silences, merciful and beneficent ; but Satan's word has its silences too, not merciful, and not beneficent. Satan's word tells of flowery paths, of alluring pleasures, of seductive companionships, of jovial nights and days ; but Satan's word is silent concerning the hidden precipices, the gnawing remorse, the degrading bondage, the deathless despair that lie in wait for the footsteps of those who walk in evil paths. Flashing lights, costly paintings, merry musicsend out their welcome to the passer, from halls of fair-seeming which are wholly devoted to the service of evil ; but no voice from within, no legend on the wall, tells of the ruined lives, the scattered households, the broken hearts, whose history found its first tragic meaning beneath these lights. *H. C. T.*

CHAPTER VIII.

- 1 DOTH not wisdom cry,
And understanding put forth her voice ?
- 2 In the top of high places by the way,
Where the paths meet, she standeth ;
- 3 Beside the gates, at the entry of the city,
At the coming in at the doors, she crieth aloud :
- 4 Unto you, O men, I call ;
And my voice is to the sons of men.
- 5 O ye simple, understand subtilty ;
And, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.
- 6 Hear, for I will speak excellent things ;
And the opening of my lips shall be right things.
- 7 For my mouth shall utter truth ;
And wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
- 8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness ;
There is nothing crooked or perverse in them.
- 9 They are all plain to him that understandeth,
And right to them that find knowledge.
- 10 Receive my instruction, and not silver :
And knowledge rather than choice gold.
- 11 For wisdom is better than rubies ;
And all the things that may be desired are not to be compared unto her.
- 12 I wisdom have made subtilty my dwelling,
And find out knowledge *and* discretion.
- 13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil :
Pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way,
And the froward mouth, do I hate.
- 14 Counsel is mine, and sound knowledge :
I am understanding ; I have might.
- 15 By me kings reign,
And princes decree justice.
- 16 By me princes rule,
And nobles, *even* all the judges of the earth.
- 17 I love them that love me ;
And those that seek me diligently shall find me.
- 18 Riches and honour are with me ;
Yea, durable riches and righteousness.
- 19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold ;
And my revenue than choice silver.
- 20 I walk in the way of righteousness,
In the midst of the paths of judgment :
- 21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance,
And that I may fill their treasuries.
- 22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.
- 23 I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,
Or ever the earth was.
- 24 When there were no depths, I was brought forth ;
When there were no fountains abounding with water.
- 25 Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills was I brought forth :
- 26 While as yet he had not made the earth,
nor the fields,
Nor the beginning of the dust of the world.
- 27 When he established the heavens, I was there :
When he set a circle upon the face of the deep :
- 28 When he made firm the skies above :
When the fountains of the deep became strong :
- 29 When he gave to the sea its bound,
That the waters should not transgress his commandment :
When he marked out the foundations of the earth :
- 30 Then I was by him, *as* a master workman :
And I was daily *his* delight,
Rejoicing always before him ;
- 31 Rejoicing in his habitable earth ;
And my delight was with the sons of men.
- 32 Now therefore, *my* sons, hearken unto me :
For blessed are they that keep my ways.
- 33 Hear instruction, and be wise,
And refuse it not.
- 34 Blessed is the man that heareth me,
Watching daily at my gates,
Waiting at the posts of my doors.
- 35 For whoso findeth me findeth life,
And shall obtain favour of the LORD.
- 36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul :
All they that hate me love death.

THE book rises here into a higher and more dramatic strain. Wisdom herself is introduced as speaking not merely, as in 1 . 20-33, in the

language of reproof, but as setting forth her own majesty and glory. Her work is seen in the marvels of the universe, in the order of

human life. She is co-eternal with the self-existing God, is with Him as one brought up with Him, works out His will, is manifested in all His works. We are reminded of the teaching of John, the later development of the truth thus sown upon the field of human thought, that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" that "without Him was not anything made that was made;" that He too was from all eternity "in the bosom of the Father." . . . Wisdom and the Eternal Word are one. Christ, who is made unto us sanctification and redemption, is also made unto us Wisdom. This truth suggests counsels, warnings, hopes, encouragements. And let it not be forgotten that the Eternal Word reveals Himself (v. 31) as One whose "delights are with the children of men." E. H. P.

In Christ we have the revelation of a God who can be known, and loved, and trusted, with a knowledge which, though it be not complete, is real and valid, with a love which is solid enough to be the foundation of a life, with a trust which is conscious that it has touched rock and builds secure. Nor is that fact that He is the revealer of God, one that began with His incarnation, or ends with His earthly life. From the beginning and before the creatural beginning, the Word was the agent of all Divine activity, the "arm of the Lord," and the source of all Divine illumination, "the face of the Lord," or, as we have the thought put in the remarkable words of this chapter of Proverbs, where the celestial and pure Wisdom is more than a personification though not yet distinctly conceived as a person, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way. I was by Him as one brought up—or as a master worker—with Him, and I was daily *His* delight; and *My* delights were with the sons of men." And after the veils of flesh and sense are done away, and we see face to face, I believe that the face which we shall see, and seeing shall have beauty born of the vision passing into our faces, will be the face of Jesus Christ, in which the light of the glory of God shall shine for the redeemed and perfected sons of God. A. M.

1-4. It is in the active service of life, in the work of the market-place, in the interchange of thought and the collision of minds differently constituted, that wisdom speaks to us. She comes as with an evangel, which she proclaims to all, which shuts out none but those who shut it out, seeking in her infinite compassion the ignorant and the foolish. E. H. P.

6-9. The subjects of which she proposes to speak are of the highest order of value, the great principles of truth and righteousness, the gravest of all questions of moral duty toward God and toward man. She speaks only truth, never falsehood; and such truth as is always plain to men of upright and honest heart. H. C.

6. They are of inestimable value; they are *excellent things, princely things*, so the Word is. Though level to the capacity of the meanest, yet there is that in them which will be entertainment for the greatest. They are Divine and heavenly things, so excellent that in comparison with them all other learning is but children's play. Things which relate to an eternal God, an immortal soul, and an everlasting state, must needs be *excellent things*.—**9.** They are all *plain*, and not hard to be understood. If the book is sealed, it is to those who are willingly ignorant. But to those who *depart from evil*, who have that *good understanding* which they have who *do the commandments*, to them *they are all plain*, and there is nothing difficult in them. The way of religion is a highway, and *the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*. H.

13. Fearing the Lord *is* hating evil. Such fear is not merely a motive to the hating of evil; nor is it merely a tendency to such hating; perhaps Solomon meant to make a stronger statement than that it insures such hatred—viz., that it is essentially identical with it and really inseparable. For with such sentiments toward God men always conceive of Him as infinitely pure, holy, and good, they revere and love Him for these qualities; and what is this but to abhor all sin? H. C.—The fear of God is the foundation of character, of wise action and of happiness. Having that foundation, a man begins to live as one that is to live forevermore. Fearing God alone, he rises above all human fear; knowing he is to give account, he tries every deed. Counting himself not his own, he is grandly generous, living to do good and not to please himself. He prays, he toils, he lives for God. E. H. G.

Pride. Under no conceivable circumstances can pride want matter on which to feed. If one is proud of his virtue, another will be proud of his vice. Birth, station, talent, beauty, wealth, and every grade and kind of earthly good, by turns will minister to this all-present passion. Nay, even spiritual privileges may thus be turned by the carnal mind into poison; men may be puffed up by the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus; and after morti-

fyings vanity in a thousand shapes, may be conquered at last by the conquered foe, and become proud even of their humility. J. J.

17. Love is the greatest thing that God can give us, for Himself is Love; and it is the greatest thing we can give to God, for it will also give ourselves, and carry with it all that is ours. Let our love be firm, constant, inseparable; not coming and returning like the tide, but descending like a never failing river, ever running into the ocean of Divine excellency, passing on in the channels of duty and a constant obedience, and never ceasing to be what it is till it comes to what it desires to be; still being a river till it be turned into a sea, and vastness, even the immensity of a blessed eternity. *Bishop J. Taylor.*

Love is the bond of perfectness, because love is itself the power that calls forth Divine law and order. For it was through law and order that God, in His love, meant to reveal Himself in the creation of the world; and it is to love we owe the law and order of the new creation. Rule and limits must be set to all things else, but love, that produces and includes both, has no need to be so restrained. Love needs no rule, for she is not unruly; she has no proud waves that must be broken, for she envies not, is not puffed up, but is long suffering and meek; she seeks not her own, and is not easily provoked (and what could raise more wild and foaming waves than that?), but beareth all things, because she hopeth all things. Therefore if love only dwells ever more richly among us, then the love of Christ, which is the source of all Christian brotherly love, will, on the one hand, constrain us to promote, by every means, thorough harmony and cheerful co operation in every good work. *Schleiermacher.*

Seek Me. The one true search of man can have but one object—God. What it is to find God we may try to state in different forms of words. But they must all have one meaning. To live daily under the conscious inspiration and guidance of His Spirit is to find Him. To believe in Christ, provided that belief embraces practice as well as faith and engages the affections as well as the intellect—which it must do if it is living and sincere—this is to find God, because God is in Christ. To keep a conscious harmony of one's own will with God's will, so as to gain spiritual liberty, patient submission, is to find him. To blend justice and mercy toward man with prayer is to find Him. To live so that the ruling aim or uppermost purpose shall be under the constant control of the principles of Christianity is to find Him. To

be spiritually-minded and so discern spiritual things is to find Him. Of course, then, to be really *seeking* any of these things—which, after all, are essentially the same thing—is to seek God. F. D. H.—Blessed are they who live and move and have their being in that infinite presence which no eye can see, and which makes itself known to us in the secret experience of our hearts. Faith in God, as the one essential law of our spiritual well being; faith in what is spiritual and Divine; faith in ideas which reach toward a better order of things; faith in truth and justice as laws involving in themselves forces which must triumph at last; faith in man, not merely as an earthly being, but as created in the image of God; faith in the kingdom of holiness and love, not as far off, but as here in the midst of us, to advance and establish itself more and more in the souls of men; faith in the transforming ideas and influences revealed to us in the thought and life of Jesus—this is what is to save the individual soul, bring it into harmony with the universe of God, and thus redeem and sanctify the world. *J. H. Morrison.*

In the last clause it is a question of some interest whether the Hebrew verb means early in life—*i.e.*, in youth; or earnestly, diligently. The word occurs in four other passages in this book—*viz.*, 13 : 24 : “He that loveth his son, chasteneth him *betimes*—*i.e.*, seasonably, early. Also, 1 : 28 : “They shall seek Me early, but they shall not find me;” but in this case they had long refused to seek God, and, therefore, at last God turns away His ear, and they seek Him not early, but earnestly, yet in vain. Also, 7 : 15 : “Therefore came I forth to meet thee, *diligently* to seek Thy face,” and 11 : 27 : “He that *diligently* seeketh good, procureth favor.” It appears, therefore, that usage somewhat favors the sense of diligently, earnestly, rather than early in life, yet it cannot be deemed decisive. The consideration that Wisdom directs her appeal so generally to the young favors the sense, early in life. A hearty earnestness is no doubt implied. H. C.

18. The greatest things of this outward world are small compared with the soul. Faith, love, hope—these are the greatest possessions. To possess God and godlike character—that is the “durable riches and righteousness.” Worldly goods fly from hand to hand. Even when they remain in one man's possession for a lifetime, he and they belong to different orders of things—and remain foreign to each other. Possession of these can never be thorough, permanent. The true riches are meant for a man.

They enter into the very substance of his being, and become interwoven with himself. They can never pass from him. A. M.

21. Wisdom *leads in the paths of righteousness* not only that she may keep her friends in the way of duty and obedience, but that she may *cause them to inherit substance* and may *fill their treasures*; which cannot be done with the things of this world, nor with anything less than God and heaven. The happiness of those that love God and devote themselves to His service is substantial and satisfactory. It is substance itself; it is a happiness which will subsist of itself and stand alone; spiritual and eternal things are the only real and substantial things. Joy in God is substantial joy, solid and well grounded; the promises are their bonds, Christ is their surety, and both substantial. They *inherit substance*; their inheritance hereafter is substantial, it is a weight of glory, it is substance (Heb. 10 : 34); all their happiness they have as heirs, it is grounded upon their sonship. It is satisfying; it will fill not only their hands, but *their treasures*; not only maintain them, but make them rich. Let the treasures of the soul be ever so capacious, there is enough in God and Christ and heaven to fill them. H.

24-26. The leading thought is beautifully expanded. When there were no great ocean deeps I was brought forth into action to plan this wondrous system of waters, made up of mountains, hills, fountains, streams, seas, and oceans, all constructed to minister to the great ends of utility and beauty in our world. H. C.

22-31. This portion of Scripture is very remarkable on several accounts. The older commentators and theologians understood it generally of the Eternal Word, or of the eternal going forth of the Logos—the same who is said (John 1 : 14) to “have become flesh and dwelt among us.” Many of the moderns have rejected this view. But let the reader carefully examine Col. 1 : 15-20; John 1 : 3; Heb. 1 : 2, 3, and ask himself, where did these writers get their doctrine of the Creative Word, or Logos? From inspiration, it may be said. Most true, indeed; but when we compare the similarity of language and idea, can we hesitate to believe that Paul had in mind both the spirit and letter of this and similar passages from the Old Testament, in what he says of “Him who is the First-born, or born before all creation, who is the image of the unseen God, and *in* whom, and *through* whom, were all things created, both in heaven and earth, both the *seen* and the *unseen*?” T. L.

We cannot wonder that most interpreters

should have seen in these words a prophetic anticipation of the mystery revealed in the Prologue of John's Gospel, and cannot doubt that they served to prepare men for it. So John, carrying the thought to its completion, declares that all which Wisdom here speaks of herself was true in its highest sense of the Word that became flesh; that “was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God,” by whom all things came into being, and who was also the Light that lighteth every man (John 1 : 1-14). E. H. P.—Whether or not the ancient writer of this Book of Proverbs understood what deep things he was saying when he painted Wisdom as *a person*—as a Person brought up with the Father “before the world was”—as a Person who rejoiced from the beginning “in the habitable parts of the earth”—we at least have a full right to lift the curtain, and let the light of the new flash back upon the old, and say, “Yes, Christ the power of God, and Christ the wisdom of God.” There, in that living person; there, in that gentle love; there, in that human form; there, in that eternal long-suffering; there, in that Brother of our race, who comes to atone, to bless, and to inspire us all, there is the highest embodiment of all wisdom. A. M.

22-31. The passage may be rendered thus : “The Lord possessed me as His own, or only Begotten, the Beginning of His ways, before His works of old. From eternity was I anointed, away before the beginning—the beginning of the antiquities of the earth. When there were no chaoses was I born, before there were any deeps swelling with waters; before the mountains were settled; before the hills *was I born*. When He had not made the earth, or the parts beyond, or the very beginning of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens I was there; when He established the skies above, when He made strong the fountains of the deep, when He made a law for the sea, even when He ordained the supports of the earth. I was ever with Him like an only child—*day—day*—was I His delight, rejoicing ever before Him. Glad was I in the orb of His earth, but my great joy was with the sons of Adam.” A feeling of vastness takes possession of us as we read this sublime description of the hypostatic wisdom, its eternal generation, its everlasting going forth in the ideal structure of the worlds. There is much of the same language we find in the ninetieth Psalm, but here is still more vividly presented the thought of stages of antiquity going far back, one after the other, to that most ancient date of all when Wisdom was

alone with God, the Firstborn, before the beginning of His creative ways. We recognize in it the choral anthem of Genesis, with its keynote of ineffable times. There is the same thought of great successions, of an organic structure, like a building, rising stage after stage to its completion. The Word and the architectonical Wisdom are one. It is not only the commanding, fiat-giving voice, but the shaping, organizing, harmonizing agent, "rejoicing ever before Him, and whose delight was with the sons of men." *T. Lewis.*

31. The closing words are also the highest and the noblest. Wisdom, who ordered the heavens, and laid firm the foundations of the earth, rejoicing in that work of hers, rejoices yet more in the world as inhabited by God's rational creatures. Giving joy and delight to God, she finds her delight among the sons of men. So far the words remind us of Hooker's noble doxology to the Divine Law, whose "seat is in the bosom of God, . . . to whom all things in heaven and earth do homage, owning her as the mother of their peace and joy." But our thoughts are carried yet further. These words, like the rest, are as an unconscious prophecy fulfilled in the Divine Word, in whom were "hid all the treasures of Wisdom." By Him all things came into being (John 1 : 3), and "are held together" (Col. 1 : 17); He too is "in the bosom of the Father" (John 1 : 18), and in Him the Father was well pleased; and yet His "joy also is fulfilled," not in the glory of the material universe, but in His work among the sons of men.

32. The old exhortation returns now with a new force. The counsels are no longer those of prudence, calculation, human experience, but that of a wisdom wide as the universe, eternal as Jehovah, ordering all things. *E. H. P.*

34. Blessed. There are fixed, axiomatic steps by which religion leads us intuitively, such as these: It is blessed to be true, through and through; cursed to be false. It is blessed to be meek; cursed to be haughty and proud. It is blessed to love one's neighbor, and cursed not to do so. It is blessed to be penitent; cursed to be impenitent. It is blessed to be good and do good. Moreover, there must be One who answers to these conceptions, entitled to one love and homage. He must be infinite. The only One whose visible life coincides with these ideas is Jesus Christ, and He reflects the unseen God. *S. E. Herrick.*

35. Findeth life. Christ is *all that any soul can need*, but *what every soul must have* that would find life. Sum up these four partic-

ulars: the right knowledge of God; a right standing or acceptance with God; holiness, or a character like God; deliverance from all evil, and a share in the blessedness of God. Is there anything more that any soul can want in the eternity of its being? Or is there anything in this brief but all-comprehensive summary of blessings that you can do without? Can you do without the knowledge of God as He is revealed in Christ? Then you must know Him out of Christ, as "a consuming fire." Can you do without a pardon from the Saviour you have offended, the Judge to whose bar you hasten? Can you do without holiness? Can you do without redemption? And would you set up your wisdom against the wisdom of God; your pride against His grace? *J. P. T.*

35, 36. "Whoso findeth Me findeth life," and "All they that hate Me love death." Eternal life and eternal death are here plainly intended. The same must be understood in 12 : 28, where we are told that, "in the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death;" and in 14 : 27, where it is said that "the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." In these places it is impossible to interpret the words life and death otherwise than as appertaining to a future state of being, because the wicked enjoy the present life as well as the righteous, and the righteous are subject to temporal death not less than the wicked. Still clearer, if possible, is the doctrine of future retribution in 14 : 32, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death." If death is the annihilation of our being, the righteous are as much driven away as the wicked; and neither can have any well-grounded hope in the mortal struggle. *E. C. W.*

36. The choice of the verb for sinning suggests this shade of thought, He that *misses* My favor, making the fatal mistake of disowning and disregarding Me, wrongs not only Me, but, far more, himself. He perpetrates a fatal wrong against his own soul. All that hate Me virtually love death! Of course, if they hate Me, it is because they love sin, and loving sin is equivalent to loving death. *H. C.*—There is no middle state in the next world, no tolerable mediocrity, but two contrary states, yet alike in this, that the happiness and misery are equally eternal; and it is just that all who neglect eternal life should suffer eternal death, for it is the natural and necessary consequence of their option; therefore sinners are charged with extreme madness to wrong their own souls and to love death. *Bates*

In regard to every course that would lead men to unhappiness, Christianity has stood from the first at the *entrance* of the paths, and uttered its warning cry. The nations have not heard it, but have rushed by and rushed on, till they have reaped the fruit of their own devices in the corruption of morals, in the confusion of society through oppression and misrule ; and then philosophy has condescended to discover these evils, and, if it has done anything for the permanent relief of society, it has brought it back to the letter or spirit of the Gospel. The stern teachings of experience are making it manifest, and they will continue to do it more and more, that the Bible is God's statute-book for the regulation of His moral creatures, and that the laws of the Bible can no more be violated with impunity than the natural laws of God. M. H.

Great multitudes utterly reject Christ and stay fast in their sins. They have no time to be religious, or the sacrifices are too great. Some are too poor to have any heart left, and some

are too rich—so rich, so filled up with goods, that a camel can as well get through a needle's eye, as Christ get into their love. Some are too much honored to receive Him, and some too much want to be. Some are in their passions, some in their pleasures, some in their expectations. Some are too young, and wait to give Him only the dry remains of life, after the natural freshness is gone. Some are too old and too much occupied with old recollections and stories of the past forever telling, to have any room longer for His reception. Some are too ignorant, and think they must learn a great deal before they can receive Him. Others know too much, having stifled their capacity already in the dry-rot of books and opinions. The great world thus, under sin, even that part of it which is called Christian, is very much like the inn at Bethlehem, preoccupied, crowded full in every part, so that, as the Mother of Jesus looked up wistfully to the guest-chambers that cold night, drawing her Holy Thing to her bosom, in like manner Jesus Himself stands at the door of these multitudes, knocking vainly there. H. B.

CHAPTER IX.

- 1 WISDOM hath builded her house,
She hath hewn out her seven pillars :
- 2 She hath killed her beasts ; she hath mingled
her wine ;
She hath also furnished her table.
- 3 She hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth
Upon the highest places of the city,
- 4 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither :
As for him that is void of understanding, she
saith to him,
- 5 Come, eat ye of my bread,
And drink of the wine which I have mingled.
- 6 Leave off, ye simple ones, and live ;
And walk in the way of understanding.
- 7 He that correcteth a scorner getteth to himself
reviling :
And he that reproveth a wicked man *getteth*
himself a blot.
- 8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee :
Reprove a wise man, and he will love thee.
- 9 Give *instruction* to a wise man, and he will
be yet wiser :

- Teach a righteous man, and he will increase
in learning.
- 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of
wisdom :
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
- 11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied,
And the years of thy life shall be increased.
- 12 If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself :
And if thou scornest, thou alone shalt
bear it.
- 13 The foolish woman is clamorous ;
She is simple, and knoweth nothing.
- 14 And she sitteth at the door of her house,
On a seat in the high places of the city,
- 15 To call to them that pass by,
Who go right on their ways,
- 16 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither :
And as for him that is void of understanding, she saith to him,
- 17 Stolen waters are sweet,
And bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.
- 18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there ;
That her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

THIS is the closing part of the large discourse which reaches from 6 : 20 to 9 : 18. It is a kind of summary of the whole, not closely connected and rigidly continuous, but passing from one subject rapidly to another, in order to touch upon the leading points of the discourse. It ends, as we might expect such a discourse to do, with a most solemn warning against the crime in question, by setting the fearful and inevitable consequences of it before the reader.

The chapter begins with the declaration that Wisdom has provided herself a house or temple, where all due preparation is made for the feast, to which she invites her chosen guests (vs. 1, 2). She sends forth her criers to summon these guests; yet not any one and every one is invited, but the simple, who lack information (vs. 3, 4). The scorner and the vile transgressor are not fitted for the instructions of Wisdom, and would not receive them or profit by them. Her guests are invited to an excellent repast, not of physical luxuries, but (what is much better) of exhortations to walk in the way of life (vs. 5, 6). Scorners refuse reproof; and to administer it only brings contempt and contumely on the reprover (vs. 7, 8). Not so with the *wise* (v. 9). Wisdom is the fear of God, which secures long life; for this receives a recompense which is meet, as scorning also does (vs. 9-12). But that enemy of all true wisdom, the adulteress, who watches for her prey, and gives out her invitations, addresses the simple, and tells them that "stolen waters are sweet" (vs. 13-17). It is an unwary youth, who does not see that her ways lead, as they surely do, to destruction (v. 18).

1. The writer had just spoken of watching and waiting at the *doors* of wisdom. Here he assigns to her a dwelling—a goodly structure, well supported and magnificently adorned, in the manner of a temple. M. S.

1-6. True wisdom is no mere quality, but a living Person; and when she "buildeth her house," and slayeth her sacrifices, and "crieth in the highest places of the city," the invitation comes to us from the lips of Christ our Brother, our Sacrifice, and our Lord. It is He that says, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither." "If any man will, let him come unto Me." A. M.—The marriage supper for the king's son: The house. The frame is set up from everlasting, well ordered in all things, and sure. The tried Foundation is the Lord our Righteousness. The seven pillars indicate, in Oriental form, that its supports and ornaments are perfect in strength and beauty. The feast prepared. The provisions of God's house are whole-

some, various, plentiful. Whatever the covenant provides, the true Church diligently sets forth in the ordinances before the people. The inviting messenger. These are the ambassadors whom Christ employs to carry the message of His mercy to their brethren. The invited guests. The message is specially addressed to the simple. Those who are conscious of ignorance are ever most ready to learn the wisdom from above. The argument by which the invitation is supported is: (1) positive, "Come, eat of My bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled;" and (2) negative, "Forsake the foolish and live." The grand turning-point is to get the prodigal to break off from that which destroys him. *Arnot.*

3. Mingled wine. In Isa. 1 : 22 "wine mixed with water" is expressly mentioned; and this is what we believe to be intended in the present case, as well as in most if not all others in which the term occurs. This impression is confirmed to our mind by the distinct knowledge we possess that the ancients were greatly in the habit of mixing water with their wine, and that pure wine was seldom taken, except in the feasts of drunkenness, when it might even be mixed with stronger ingredients. But under all ordinary circumstances the wine was mixed with water, so as to form a table drink, refreshing, and but slightly exciting, unless taken in very large quantities. The quantity of water was usually proportioned to the strength of the wine. Sometimes three parts water were added to one of wine, and at other times five parts water to one of wine. *Kitto.*

4-16. This Book of Proverbs (emphatically a young man's book) sets before us one thing or other, wisdom or folly. The whole of the early chapters show us the picture of a lad, standing at the opening of his life, and round about him a variety of voices and inducements, some drawing him one way and some drawing him another. They paint for us youth as it comes to us all, wooed by enticements of sinners, by siren songs from every side, exhorted by the grave words of a severer wisdom, counselled by a father's lips, implored by a mother's tears. To young men these conflicting voices speak. Now, is it not a great gain that here we should get all these diverse appeals that are made to us from all sides, all the different ways which open out for us in the course of life, gathered up and packed together into two? Life is reduced to an alternative; there is clearly marked out for us all at the beginning of our life that all is one thing or other, wisdom or folly. Wisdom sits in the highest places of the

city and cries, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in *hither!*" Folly sits in the highest places of the city, and cries with the same invitation, "Whoso is simple, let him turn in *hither!*" And to these two voices all the noise and tumult of life and all the diverse voices in your own souls may be reduced. They are all either the call of the wisdom of God, or they are the call of folly, sense, and sin. A. M.

7. He meets with shameful and reproachful treatment; not that what he does is shameful, but that the man reproved acts shamefully toward him. 8. This verse gives the ground of the preceding assertion. The hatred of the scorner is roused by reproof, and so he will manifest it in reproaches. Exactly the reverse will be the wise man's conduct. He will be grateful, and will love thee for fidelity. 9. The *giving* in this case implies *admonitory counsel*. The good man will duly appreciate this, and so will add to his stock of instruction. M. S.

10, 11. Wisdom begins with the fear of God. This fear must always be its chief element. The word "holy" in the clause, "The knowledge of the holy," refers to God in the special sense of knowing God as the Holy One, and of having a just conception of His perfect purity of character. This is true understanding. Such a sense of a holy and just God imparts the best practical understanding of personal duty. Such practical wisdom (especially in those days) conduced to longevity. God's blessing was with it. H. C.

Because the fear or love of God, the knowledge or study of His will, faith or trust in Him, the remembrance of Him, or frequent meditating upon His laws, are principal parts of religion, and have so great an influence upon men that one of these virtues can hardly be found separate from the rest, or without producing its genuine effects in a religious life; therefore each of these are frequently put singly in Scripture for the whole of religion. And because each one of these phrases singly signifies the sum of religion, therefore any two of them may likewise be used as synonymous to each other; as, in the text, the fear and the knowledge of the Lord: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding." S. Clarke.—The wisdom that he speaks about is wisdom that has rectitude for an essential part of it, the fibre of its very being is righteousness and holiness. There is no true wisdom which does not rest calmly upon a basis of truthfulness of heart, and is not guarded and nurtured by righteousness and purity of life. Man is one—one and in-

dissoluble. The intellect and the conscience are but two names for diverse parts of the one human being, or rather they are but two names for diverse workings of the one immortal soul. And though it be possible that a man may be enriched with all earthly knowledge, while his heart is the dwelling-place of all corruption; and that, on the other hand, a man may be pure and upright in heart, while his head is very poorly furnished and his understanding very weak—yet these exceptional cases do not touch the great central truth, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding." Here, then, is the first outline of this fair form that rises before you—a wisdom satisfying and entire for all the understanding, and not a dry, hard, abstract wisdom either, but one which is all glowing with light and purity, and is guidance for the will, and cleansing for the conscience, and strength for the practical life—wisdom which is morality and righteousness; morality and righteousness which is the highest wisdom. A. M.

12. Here is a plain, positive assertion of every man's exclusive responsibility for his own acts and of his own suffering of their consequences. The meaning is, If thou hast gotten wisdom, religion, salvation, thou shalt get what it gives in thine own heart's experience; but if thou dost despise and neglect it, thou alone shalt bear the consequences of such neglect. B.

Nothing is more difficult than to realize that every man has a distinct soul, that every one of all the millions who live or have lived is as whole and independent a being in himself as if there were no one else in the whole world but he. Newman.—It is this distinct personality that gives their dignity to individual men. The special dignity of each individual redeemed man is that he, sharing this nature which is united to God, has in it a form of life peculiar to himself, something that no other being has; that he has to do for God what no one else is so called to do, or perhaps is so able to do; that he can exhibit in himself a character of grace, and fill a place, a sphere of glory, which no one but he himself is called to occupy, or perhaps can in all respects occupy as God purposed. From this fact of distinct individual existence flow all duties and responsibilities, all relations and claims of service in the momentous issues of life. They are, if fulfilled, the accomplishment of our special calling of God; if neglected, they are the measure of our utter loss and eternal condemnation. Canon Carter.

There is no escape from the law that makes

the work of regeneration into higher spiritual states personal, reserved, separate. There is no social salvation excusing the individual. Society is a great interest, but it can never shift responsibility from you and me. Men must go into the kingdom of heaven, if they go at all, just as they go into any grand experience—be born again, just as they are born into the life that now is—one by one, and each for himself. And alone we must go, and be prepared to go by prayer and faith, through all the deeper and more solemn exigencies of our life; alone through besetting temptation, and the loss of what is most precious; alone through the defection of friends and through personal discouragement; alone to the judgments of the Most High; alone from thence to reap as each hath sown. F. D. H.

We alone have to do with Him alone. The awful fact of individuality, that solemn mystery of our personal being, has its most blessed or its most dread manifestation in our relation to God. There no other being has any power. Counsel and stimulus, suggestion or temptation, instruction or lies, which may tend to lead us nearer to Him or away from Him, they may indeed give us; but after they have done their best or their worst, all depends on the personal act of our own innermost being. Man nor angel can affect that but from without. The old mystics called prayer “the flight of the lonely soul to the only God.” It is the name for all religion. These two, God and the soul, have to “transact,” as our Puritan forefathers used to say, as if there were no other beings in the universe but only they two. Angels and principalities and powers may stand beholding with sympathetic joy; they may minister blessing and guardianship in many ways; but the decisive act of union between God and the soul they can neither effect nor prevent. A. M.

13-18. In several points this description of the foolish woman stands in contrast over against Wisdom as she appears in this chapter. She, too, has a house of her own, at the door of which she sits; her seat is “in the high places of the city” (precisely the same words which are said of Wisdom, v. 3); like Wisdom, she, too, invites the simple to turn in hither, and he that wanteth understanding (compare v. 6); but her arguments are peculiarly her own. “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” Her appeals turn on the pleasures of sinning. H. C.—A certain scorn is traceable in the details of the

contrast. The foolish woman has her house, but it is no stately palace with seven pillars, like the home of Wisdom. No train of maidens wait on her and invite her guests, but she herself sits at the door, forcing herself into a position as prominent as that of Wisdom (compare v. 14 with v. 3), counterfeiting her voice, making the same offer to the same class (compare v. 16 with v. 4). The words of the temptress appeal to the besetting sin of all times and countries, the one great proof of the inherent corruption of man's nature. Pleasures are attractive *because* they are forbidden. “I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom. 7 : 7). As in 2 : 18, the veil is drawn away, and behind the scene of voluptuousness is seen the world of the dead. The spectres of past transgressors haunt it. Perishing in their guilt, or losing their true life, they are already in the depths of Hades. No words can add anything to the awfulness of that warning, and with it the long introduction closes and the collection of separate proverbs begins. Wisdom and Folly have each spoken; the issues of each have been painted in life-like hues. The learner is left to choose. E. II. P.

V. 12. *The true life hidden and lived alone.* All the visible relations we sustain, the pursuits in which we are employed, the achieved results of toil, the ties of association with others, the varied physical and social influences to which we are subject—all that makes up the round of external incidents, relations, employments, actions and events, derive meaning and value alone from their bearing upon the inward life of the soul. In themselves they are but the signals and tokens of the invisibly acting spirit, the indices of the hidden moral nature, the *media* through which the unseen vital forces of the soul are manifested, the temporary objects designed to stimulate these forces to action. But hidden far down beneath them all is the deep, resistless undercurrent of real vital action and experience, flowing darkly and alone. Made up is this mysterious life-current of thoughts and feelings, of aspirations and sympathies, of griefs and joys, of spiritual gains and disappointments, temptations, struggles, falls and victories, which are incapable of expression of transfer, or of participation. And *this* is man's real history, never known and therefore never written by man, known and written only by the All-seeing God

CHAPTER X.

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMO

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| <p>1 A WISE son maketh a glad father :
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.</p> <p>2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing :
But righteousness delivereth from death.</p> <p>3 The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish :
But he thrusteth away the desire of the wicked.</p> <p>4 He becometh poor that dealeth with a slaek hand :
But the hand of the diligent maketh rich.</p> <p>5 He that gathereth in summer is a wise son :
But he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.</p> <p>6 Blessings are upon the head of the righteous :
But violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.</p> <p>7 The memory of the righteous is blessed
But the name of the wicked shall rot.</p> <p>8 The wise in heart will receive commandments :
But a prating fool shall fall.</p> <p>9 He that walketh uprightly walketh surely :
But he that perverteth his ways shall be known.</p> <p>10 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow :
But a prating fool shall fall.</p> <p>11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life :
But violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.</p> <p>12 Hatred stirreth up strifes :
But love covereth all transgressions.</p> <p>13 In the lips of him that hath discernment wisdom is found :
But a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.</p> <p>14 Wise men lay up knowledge :
But the mouth of the foolish is a present destruction.</p> <p>15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city :
The destruction of the poor is their poverty.</p> <p>16 The labour of the righteous <i>tendeth</i> to life ;
The increase of the wicked to sin.</p> | <p>17 He is in the way of life that heedeth correction :
But he that forsaketh reproof erreth.</p> <p>18 He that hideth hatred is of lying lips ;
And he that uttereth a slander is a fool.</p> <p>19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression :
But he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely.</p> <p>20 The tongue of the righteous is <i>as</i> choice silver :
The heart of the wicked is little worth.</p> <p>21 The lips of the righteous feed many :
But the foolish die for lack of understanding.</p> <p>22 The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich,
And he addeth no sorrow therewith.</p> <p>23 It is as sport to a fool to do wickedness :
And <i>so</i> is wisdom to a man of understanding.</p> <p>24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him :
And the desire of the righteous shall be granted.</p> <p>25 When the whirlwind passeth, the wicked is no more :
But the righteous is an everlasting foundation.</p> <p>26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes,
So is the sluggard to them that send him.</p> <p>27 The fear of the LORD prolongeth days :
But the years of the wicked shall be shortened.</p> <p>28 The hope of the righteous <i>shall be</i> gladness :
But the expectation of the wicked shall perish.</p> <p>29 The way of the LORD is a strong hold to the upright ;
But it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity.</p> <p>30 The righteous shall never be removed :
But the wicked shall not dwell in the land.</p> <p>31 The mouth of the righteous bringeth forth wisdom :
But the froward tongue shall be cut off.</p> <p>32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable :
But the mouth of the wicked <i>speaketh</i> frowardness.</p> |
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HERE commences a distinct portion of the Book of Proverbs. It is specially attributed to Solomon, and extends unchanged in general character to chap. 22 : 16. Its special feature is that each proverb is complete in itself, having no intimate connection with what precedes or

follows. Usually each proverb is made up of two propositions or affirmations, one over against the other, *i.e.*, in antithetic relations.

1. Wisdom and folly are here, not in the intellectual sense merely, but in a moral also (as throughout this book); wisdom, an upright state of heart and course of life, controlled by the fear of God; folly, a wicked heart and life that casts off all fear of God and all due regard for man. It is assumed that the former insures prosperity; the latter, ruin—for this world primarily, and, by inference, for the world to come. The places assigned in this proverb to the father and the mother respectively were not named at random. It would not do nearly so well to say, “A wise son maketh a glad mother, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his father.” It is much more according to the facts of human nature as Solomon has it.

2. “Treasures of wickedness” are treasures ill-gotten, *i.e.*, by oppression, fraud, theft, robbery. To say that such treasures profit nothing is the most effective thing that could be said, because men do not perpetrate such wickedness for its own sake, but for the sake of the gain it may bring. On the other hand, a righteous course of life will bring the utmost possible good; for what can be a greater good than to deliver from the greatest and worst of other human ills which the word death is used here to represent. The antithesis lies therefore between ill-gotten gain, absolutely good for nothing, worse than no gain at all, and a life true and righteous in this and all other respects which insures the best of earthly blessings. A similar sentiment appears in chap. 11 : 6. H. C.

Godliness may do a man good without gain, but worldly gain can do a man no good without godliness. Riches, joined with godliness and good conscience, are the good blessings of God, a means of good to ourselves, and of doing good unto others; but being severed from godliness and the true fear of God are rather occasion of evil than otherwise, rather an instrument of vice than any furtherance to virtue, a means to make our sins the greater here, and our condemnation the more grievous hereafter. *Gataker*.

Faith possesses thee of what thou hast not; covetousness dispossesses thee of what thou hast. Thou canst not serve God unless mammon serve thee. *Quarles*.—Three things earthly riches can never do: they can never satisfy Divine justice, they can never pacify Divine wrath, nor can they ever quiet a guilty conscience. And till these things are done man is undone. *T. Brooks*.

4. **Diligent maketh rich.** Excellence of every sort is invariably placed beyond the reach of indolence. It is the diligent hand that maketh rich—in self culture, growth in wisdom, and in business. Even when men are born to wealth and high position, any solid reputation which they may achieve is only attained by energetic application; for though an inheritance of acres may be bequeathed, an inheritance of knowledge cannot. *Smiles*.—“The hand of the diligent maketh rich,” is one truth; “the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich,” is another. We should reverently admit and act on both. *C. Clemance*.

Industry need not wish; and he that lives upon hopes will die fasting. There are no gains without pains, then help hands, for I have no lands, or if I have they are smartly taxed. He that hath a trade hath an estate, and he that hath a calling hath an office of profit and honor; but then the trade must be worked at and the calling followed, or neither the estate nor the office will enable us to pay our taxes. *B. Franklin*.

This rule applies alike to the business of life and the concerns of the soul. Diligence is necessary to the laying up of treasures, either within or beyond the reach of rust. Debts will rise above the gains, corruptions will gain ground on the graces, unless there be a watchful heart and a diligent hand. He who would gain in godliness must put his soul into the business. When all counts are closed, he who is rich in faith is the richest man. *Arnot*.

7. “Memory” and “name” are here equivalent terms, both referring to posthumous fame—what is thought, said, and felt of men after they are dead. The righteous man leaves a name fragrant with sweet odors, hallowed memories; but the name of the wicked, foul and loathsome during its swift decay, the living are in haste to forget and to bury that it pollute the atmosphere no longer. H. C.—“The memory of the righteous is blessed,” for the mind reverts to it with delight from the sight of the living evil in the world, sometimes even prefers this silent society to the living good. We can devoutly bless God that they were such, and that as such we have had the happiness to know them. Is it not a reasonable object of Christian desire to leave a memory that shall be “blessed?” Not a passion for vainglory, but a wish to be so associated with good imparted as to render that good the dearer and the more effectual; a wish to remain, as long as remembered, a motive, an argument, an incitement to all good to those who follow—

thus to do good here after being gone hence. J. F.

Not in the future world alone do the works of the righteous follow them ; for in this world they live also, and from this world new harvests following on will be reported in that from every generation. **But the name of the wicked shall rot.** And is there not a reverse curse for those of an opposite character, whose influence, alike immortal, by thought, word, and deed, sins on in like manner in the reproduction of successive harvests of evil ? What shall be said of the authors of licentious but fascinating books, immortal by the combination of their genius with the flame of depraved passion, the fires of which it both feeds upon and kindles anew with fresh intensity ? Into how many generations of minds may the seed thus sown go down, reproductive in every generation ? *Their works follow them, but they never rest from their labors.* The evils let loose in human society are sure to come back to their masters. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some they follow after." G. B. C.

9. Men's integrity will be their security. *He that walks uprightly toward God and man is faithful to both ; he that designs as he ought and means as he says, he walks surely, he is safe under a Divine protection and easy in a holy security.* He goes on his way with an humble boldness, being well armed against the temptations of Satan, the troubles of the world, and the reproaches of men. He knows what ground he stands on, what guide he follows, what guard he is surrounded with, and what glory he is going to, and therefore proceeds with assurance and *great peace.* H.—Amid the perplexities which arise from the unexpected events of life we are not left without sufficient guidance ; for although in particular instances the most reasonable calculations are baffled and the best plans subverted, yet there remains in our hands the immutable rule of moral rectitude, in an inflexible adherence to which we shall avoid what is chiefly to be dreaded in calamity, the dismal moanings of a wounded conscience. "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely," even in the path of disaster. And while, on the one hand, he steadily pursues the track which common prudence marks out, and, on the other, listens with respectful attention to the dictates of honor and probity, he may without danger of enthusiasm ask and hope for the especial aids of Divine providence in overruling those events which lie beyond the reach of human agency. I. T

10. "Winking with the eye" means artful, covert mischief. Such cunning, malicious plotting brings sorrow to others, while the babbling fool, always divulging his worst thoughts, brings not so much sorrow to others as ruin to himself. The former is the man to be feared and hated. The latter gets his own punishment without much help from the guardians of the public weal and the offices of justice. H. C.

11-21. We have here another very prominent lesson of this book, the regulation of the tongue and the mighty power of speech, whether for good or evil. The blessing which there is in fit and seasonable words is beautifully represented by a well of life, which issues forth its refreshing and salubrious waters. The mouth is that through which wisdom or its opposite passes in efflux, as touched upon in vs. 11, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21. T. C.

11. The righteous speaks words adapted to preserve life, he gives saving or salutary counsel ; the wicked use deceit, in order to perpetrate injuries. M. S.—How industrious a good man is, by communicating his goodness, to do good with it. *His mouth*, the outlet of his mind, *is a well of life*, a constant spring whence issues good discourse for the edification of others. It is like *a well of life* that is pure and clean, not only not poisoned, but not muddled with any corrupt communication. H.

12. Hatred stirreth up strifes : but love covereth all transgressions. The antithesis here lies between the enkindling on the one hand and the allaying and quenching of strife on the other. The spirit of hate stands over against the spirit of love, the former firing up strife ; the latter extinguishing or preventing it, putting the best construction they will bear upon things doubtful, and suppressing from view where it can be done wisely. Peter seems to have had this proverb in mind (1 Pet. 4 : 8). H. C.—The meaning here is obviously, as determined by the other clause, love covers, *i.e.*, first hides, does not expose, and then forgives and forgets all sins. As such, it helps to determine the meaning of James 5 : 20 ; 1 Pet. 4 : 8, where the use of the word "charity" in the A. V. hinders the English reader from recognizing the identity. E. H. P.

The little that I have seen in the world, and know of the history of mankind, teaches me to look upon their errors in sorrow not in anger. When I take the history of one poor heart that has sinned and suffered, and represent to myself the struggles and temptations it has passed through ; the brief pulsation of joy ; the tears of regret ; the feebleness of purpose ; the scorn

of the world that has little charity ; the desolation of the soul's sanctuary and threatening voices within ; health gone, happiness gone, I would fain leave the erring soul of my fellow-man with Him from whose hands it came. *Chalmers.*

Love likes right well to praise openly ; but it does not go to the house-top to proclaim offences. Its hand is slow to smite, and, if it must, it wounds tenderly. It *can* reprove, but gentle are its rebukes—it weeps while it warns, dropping a tear over a brother's sins, and would rejoice if that tear washed them out. Its self-denying labors abound ; ever afoot on errands of mercy, or on some emprise of philanthropy, it grudges no toil, if it only succeed in making one sad heart glad, or one happy heart still more happy. *Traill.*—Think how much love can bear ! “Love suffereth long, and is kind.” We have but to remember what parents will bear from a wayward, wicked son. When promises are all broken, and compassion itself seems quenched in despair, the first sign of repentance or reform is hailed with hope, and the parental heart makes haste with its invitation, “Come home once more.” True to life, the dear old parable tells its story of Fatherhood waiting to bless the wandering, lost child—touching picture of what love can do and suffer. We cannot wonder that love is supreme in the Gospel, when we look upon this parabolic picture of the love of God. *Stevens.*—Love takes no satisfaction in the faults of others ; dislikes to think evil of any, but prefers to believe good of all ; and rejoices whenever truth triumphs over slander and falsehood. It never tattles, and never retaliates ; it bears reproaches against itself, endures meekly the indignities that are put upon it, and hopes on, “even against hope,” that men will love the good and do the right. Such a love is greater than all knowledge, stronger than all faith. It is the one thing that shall never wear out nor exhaust itself. J. P. T.

14. Lay up. The point of the maxim is not that the wise man acquires knowledge, but that he is reticent, cautious, frugal in displaying it, storing what will endure and be precious, reserving what he has to say for the right time, place, and persons, as contrasted with the mouth of the foolish, ever giving immediate utterance to what destroys himself and others. E. H. P.

19. *In many words there wants not sin.* That flux of the tongue, that prattling and babbling disease, is very common ; and hence so many impertinencies, yea, so many of these worse ills

in their discourses, whispering about and inquiring and censuring this and that. And this draws men to speak many things that agree not with the rules of wisdom, and charity, and sincerity. *He that refraineth his lips is wise.* L.

20. The *tongue* utters words ; the *heart* conceives them ; so that *tongue* and *heart* have, in this passage, substantially the same thing in view. It is assumed here that the righteous utters that which is accordant with his character, and then his words are of much worth. But the conceptions of the wicked are worthless. M. S.—The proverb implies that the wicked man's tongue is *as* his heart—bad, and of the least possible value. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” The comparison of the tongue of the just to choice silver is expressive, showing that its words are precious, fraught with the best influences. H. C.

21. The lips of the righteous feed many. Themselves satisfied from the Lord's own hand, they will feed others. The Lord's disciples are made mediators between the source of life and those that are perishing. He blesses, He breaks, He is the bread of life, but all the disciples stand round Him, getting from His hands, and giving to those who will receive. A Christian's lips should keep knowledge ; in the heart a precious store, through the lips a perennial flow for the feeding of many. *Arnot*

22. Sentiment : “God's blessing enriches, and that without increasing sorrow.” The meaning is not that he who is *enriched* shall have no sorrows in the present life ; but that sorrows are not of necessity increased by riches when it is Jehovah who bestows them. The prosperity of the mere worldling, procured by unlawful means, brings many sorrows with it. M. S.—He had said (v. 4), *The hand of the diligent makes rich*, as a means ; but here he ascribes it to *the blessing of the Lord* ; but that blessing is upon *the hand of the diligent*. It is thus in spiritual riches. Diligence in getting them is our duty, but God's blessing and grace must have all the glory of that which is acquired. H.

The truth here is twofold. It means that God's blessing gives material wealth ; and also, that they are rich who have that blessing, although they get nothing more. His blessing makes rich. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Here is a mixture prescribed by the All-wise, for satisfying a soul, and attaining success in life. “He addeth no sorrow with it.” The word seems to imply that there

are two ways of acquiring wealth. Some people grow rich without God's blessing, and some people grow rich by it. It would appear that the god of the world gives riches to his subjects sometimes, when neither giver nor getter owns the supremacy of the Almighty, and that God Himself gives riches to some who are His children. Wherein lies the difference, since both the godless and the godly have gotten wealth? It lies here: He addeth no sorrow with it, but that other lord does. . . . When you are permitted to obtain wealth on which you do not seek and do not get God's blessing, that wealth becomes a sorrow. There is no more manifest mark of a righteous providence now seen protruding through into time than the sorrow that comes with ill-gotten wealth. *Arnot.*

Nothing that is without a man can make him rich or restful. The treasures which are kept in coffers are not real, but only those which are kept in the soul. Nothing which cannot enter into the substance of the life and character can satisfy us. That which we are makes us rich or poor, that which we own is a trifle. A. M. —Happiness and comfort stream immediately from God Himself, as light issues from the sun, and sometimes looks and darts itself into the meanest corners, while it forbears to visit the largest and the noblest rooms. Every man is happy or miserable as the temper of his mind places him either directly under, or beside, the influences of the Divine nature; which enlighten and enliven the disposed mind with secret, ineffable joys, such as the vicious or unprepared mind is wholly unacquainted with. "We have nothing, and yet we possess all things," says the apostle. And can a greater happiness be imagined than that which gives a man here all things in possession, together with a glorious eternity in reversion? In a word, it is not what a man has, but what he is which must make him happy. *South.*

It is not gold or silver; it is not land or houses: it is not a flourishing business or hoarded funds that constitute true riches. These things are haunted by meagre desires and distracting cares. The true riches are health, and a pure heart, and love of Christ, and love to man, and perfect trust in the sustaining providence of God, and a cheerful spirit, and a noble charity. And to all men alike, above all to men wearying themselves in the very fire for the unsatisfying and uncertain goods of earth, *the blessing of the Lord, that maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it.* *Farrar.*

24. The thing the wicked fear will surely befall him; the thing the righteous desire God

will grant. The agency of God is involved in the last verb which is not in the passive form ("shall be granted"), but in the active; He (*i.e.*, God) will grant. The worst fears of the wicked will be realized; the highest desires and anticipations of the righteous God will fulfil. What a contrast! II. C. —The desires of a righteous man and the desires of his God agree. God has a desire to thee, thou hast a desire to Him. God desires truth in the inward parts, and so dost thou with all thy heart. God desires mercy, and to show it to the needy; that is what thou also wantest and what thy soul craves at His hand. Seek, man; ask, knock, and do not be discouraged; the Lord will grant all thy desires. *Bunyan.*

26. The point common to these cases is discomfort, annoyance, vexation. The sluggard is a simple nuisance to those who employ and trust him. H. C.

27-30. These truths are confirmed by the nature of things and the positive appointments of Providence. In the nature of things men destroy themselves and shorten their days by many kinds of wickedness. By wars and desolations they unpeople whole countries; by private quarrels they bring each other to untimely ends; by capital crimes they cause themselves to be cut off by the hands of justice; by luxury and intemperance they destroy their bodies; by envy and malice they consume themselves in the midst of their iniquity. In like manner, according to the same tendency, by peace and charity men are preserved from destruction; by temperance their bodies are maintained in health; by quiet of conscience and satisfaction of mind new life is added to their spirits. *S. Clarke.*

27. Though the life of the upright be numbered only by days and the life of the wicked by years, the life of the upright is long, and the life of the wicked is short; for the one has been filled full with the blessings of Jehovah, while the other has fallen far short of any worthy goal. The days of those who fear the Lord shall be as years in their fruitful results; the years of the wicked shall be shortened, because each successive year will contain less and less of that which constitutes true life. H. C. T.

29. "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, but destruction to the workers of iniquity." It is the same way which is strength to one man and ruin to another, and the moral nature of the man determines which it shall be to him. That is a penetrating word which goes deep down. The unknown thinkers, to whose keen insight into the facts of human life we are

indebted for this Book of Proverbs, had pondered for many an hour over the perplexed and complicated fates of men, and they crystallized their reflections at last in this thought. They have in it struck upon a principle which explains a great many things, and teaches us a great many solemn lessons. The way of the Lord means not the road in which God prescribes that we should walk, but that road in which He Himself walks ; or, in other words, the scene of the Divine action, the solemn footsteps of God through creation, providence, and history. His goings forth are from everlasting. His way is in the sea. His way is in the sanctuary. Modern language has a whole set of phrases which mean the same thing as the Jew meant by "the way of the Lord," only that God is left out. They talk about the "current of events," "the general tendency of things," "the laws of human affairs," and so on. I for my part prefer the old-fashioned "Hebraism." To many modern thinkers the whole drift and tendency of human affairs affords no sign of a person directing these. They hear the clashing and grinding of opposing forces, the thunder as of falling avalanches and the moaning as of a homeless wind, but they hear the sound of no footfalls echoing down the ages. This ancient teacher had keener ears. Well for us if we share his faith and see in all the else distracting mysteries of life and history, "the way of the

Lord." But not only does the expression point to the operation of a personal Divine Will in human affairs, but it conceives of that operation as one, a uniform and consistent whole. However complicated and sometimes apparently contradictory the individual events were, there was a unity in them, and they all converged on one result. The writer does not speak of "ways," but of "the way," as in a grand unity. It is all one continuous, connected, consistent mode of operation from beginning to end. The way of the Lord, says this old thinker, *is* hard to understand, very complicated, full of all manner of perplexities and difficulties, and yet on the whole the clear drift and tendency of the whole thing is discernible, and it is this : it is all on the side of good. Everything that is good and everything that does good is an ally of God's, and may be sure of the Divine favor, and of the Divine blessing resting upon it. And just because that is so clear the other side is as true ; the same way, the same set of facts, the same continuous stream of tendency, which is all with and for every form of good, is all against every form of evil. A. M.

31. The beauty and force of this proverb are heightened by the figure underlying it in the choice of its words. The mouth of the just bears (produces) wisdom as a tree bears fruit ; but the perverse tongue shall be cut off like dead, worthless branches. H. C.

CHAPTER XI.

1 A FALSE balance is an abomination to the LORD :

But a just weight is his delight.

2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame :

But with the lowly is wisdom.

3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them :

But the perverseness of the treacherous shall destroy them.

4 Riches profit not in the day of wrath :

But righteousness delivereth from death.

5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct [or, *make plain*] his way :

But the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them :

But they that deal treacherously shall be taken in their own mischief.

7 When a wicked man dieth, *his* expectation shall perish :

And the hope of iniquity perisheth.

8 The righteous is delivered out of trouble,

And the wicked cometh in his stead.

9 With his mouth the godless man destroyeth his neighbour :

But through knowledge shall the righteous be delivered.

10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth :

And when the wicked perish, there is shouting.

11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted :

But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

12 He that despiseth his neighbour is void of wisdom :

- But a man of understanding holdeth his peace.
- 13 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets :
But he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.
- 14 Where no wise guidance is, the people falleth :
But in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.
- 15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it :
But he that hateth suretiship is sure.
- 16 A gracious woman obtaineth honour :
And violent men obtain riches
- 17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul :
But he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.
- 18 The wicked earneth deceitful wages :
But he that soweth righteousness *hath* a sure reward.
- 19 He that is stedfast in righteousness *shall attain* unto life :
And he that pursueth evil *doeth it* to his own death.
- 20 They that are perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD :
But such as are perfect in *their* way are his delight.
- 21 *Though* hand *join* in hand, the evil man shall not be unpunished :
But the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.
- 22 *As* a jewel of gold in a swine's snout,
So is a fair woman which is without discretion.
- 23 The desire of the righteous is only good :
But the expectation of the wicked is wrath.
- 24 There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more ;
And there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* only to want.
- 25 The liberal soul shall be made fat :
And he that watereth shall be watered also himself.
- 26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him :
But blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.
- 27 He that diligently seeketh good seeketh favour :
But he that searcheth after mischief, it shall come unto him.
- 28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall :
But the righteous shall flourish as the green leaf.
- 29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind :
And the foolish shall be servant to the wise of heart.
- 30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life ;
And he that is wise winneth souls.
- 31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth :
How much more the wicked and the sinner !

1. SCALES and small stones for weights were used to determine the exact quantity of various articles bought and sold in trade. This proverb teaches not only that the eye of God is upon all such transactions, but that His *heart* is in them as well, and especially that He disapproves and even abhors fraud in trade ; while His sympathies are with the injured party. He feels as those men do who are cheated and wronged by fraud. He loves the honest dealer. The principle applies to fraud in *quality* as well as to fraud in *quantity*. H. C.—*A false balance* is here put for all manner of unjust and fraudulent practices in dealing with any person, which are all an *abomination to the Lord*, and render those abominable to Him that allow themselves in the use of such cursed arts of thriving. It is an affront to justice which God is the patron of, as well as a wrong to our neighbor whom God is the protector of. Men make light of such frauds and think there is no sin in that which there is money to be got by, and while it passes undiscovered they cannot

blame themselves for it ; a blot is no blot till it is hit (Hos. 12 : 7, 8). But they are not the less an abomination to God, who will be the avenger of those that defraud their brethren. Nothing is more pleasing to God than fair and honest dealing, nor more necessary to make us and our devotions acceptable to Him. *A just weight is His delight*. He Himself holds the scale of judgment with an even hand, and therefore is pleased with those that are herein followers of Him. H.

Our God is emphatically a God of justice. Wherever there is deceit in the world, wherever injury, wherever oppression, there is God's anger and loathing accompanying it. The false balance, which is an abomination to the Lord, where do we not see it around us ? Of every rank and class some, and far too many, are and are allowed to be and are tolerated as men of fraud, men of mere shine—workers and upholders of deceit. The secret of all wrong is the false balance within the heart ; the real cheating begins there. An unfair dealer has

defrauded himself before ever he defrauded another. And this is a most important consideration for all of us. Have we the balance right within? *Alford.*

I hardly know anything more strange than that you recognize honesty in play, and you do not in work. Your English watchword is "fair play," your English hatred, foul play. Did it ever strike you that you wanted another watchword also, "fair work;" and another hatred also, foul work? You drive a gambler out of the gambling-room who loads dice, but you leave a tradesman in flourishing business who loads scales! For, observe, all dishonest dealing is loading scales. *Ruskin.* — The worst sin is not some outburst of gross transgression, forming an exception to the ordinary tenor of a life, bad and dismal as such a sin is; but the worst and most fatal are the small continuous vices which root underground and honeycomb the soul. Many a man who thinks himself a Christian is in most danger from the daily commission of small pieces of sharp practice in his business. White ants pick a carcass clean sooner than a lion will. *A. M.*

Honesty is the best policy for personal peace and for Divine blessing. Honesty is to be pursued for its own sake, as the only condition of personal peace. Were there no Divine blessing in question at all, conscientious men would be as honest as they are now. At the same time, it makes the honesty all the happier that it lies in the sunshine of the Infinite Presence, and that His radiant smile is on it. There is no danger of a mercenary spirit entering into such a relation with God. *Edgar.*

2. Literally and forcibly the Hebrew reads, Pride comes, and then comes disgrace; but with the modest and lowly (as opposed to the proud) is wisdom. There is no wisdom in pride. It never gains the ends of honor which men seek to gain by it. *H. C.* — Pride is a sin which men have reason to be themselves ashamed of; it is a shame to a man who springs out of the earth, who lives upon alms, depends upon God, and has forfeited all he has to be proud. It is a sin for which God often brings men down, for God *resists the proud*, contradicts them, and counterworks them in the thing they are proud of (*Isa. 2 : 11*); and as with the proud there is folly and will be shame, so *with the lowly there is wisdom* and will be honor, for a man's wisdom gains him respect. Considering how safe and quiet and easy they are that are of an humble spirit, what communion they have with God and comfort in themselves; we will say, *With the lowly is wisdom.* *H.*

Pride? What is the man proud of? Money? It will not procure for him one night's sleep. It will not buy back a lost friend. It will not bribe off approaching death. Land? A very little bit of it will serve him soon. Birth? What has he inherited but sin and corruption? Learning? If he is equal to Newton he has gathered one little pebble on the ocean's shore, and even that one he must soon lay down again. With the lowly is wisdom—the wisdom from above. The lowest parts of the land are warm and fertile; the lofty mountains are cold and barren. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." *Arnot.*

3. The integrity of an honest man will itself be his guide in the way of duty and the way of safety. His principles are fixed, his rule is certain, and therefore his way is plain; his sincerity keeps him steady, and he needs not tack about every time the wind turns, having no other end to drive at than to keep a good conscience. *Integrity and uprightness will preserve men* (*Psalm 25 : 21*).

4. The *day of death* will be a *day of wrath*; it is a messenger of God's wrath; therefore when Moses had meditated on man's mortality, he takes occasion thence to admire *the power of God's anger* (*Psalm 90 : 11*). It is a debt owing not to nature, but to God's justice. After death *the judgment*, and that is a *day of wrath*. Riches will stand men in no stead in that day; they will neither put by the stroke nor ease the pain, much less take out the sting; what profit will this world's birthrights be of then? *H.*

7. It is not in man to limit his expectations and hopes by the bounding line of death. He must and will expect to live on beyond that line and will hope for good there; but the wicked man's hope as to that future life *will perish!* *H. C.* — Of all places the earth is the least proper to be made the scene of deceptions. In the world of despair—if delusion were possible—it would mitigate pain, and would endanger nothing. Nothing there can be worse, even in imagination, than the reality. But here everything is at stake. We play and sport on the verge of a precipice. Death is real; and the grave is real; and hell is real; and the judgment is real. Not one of them is the work of fancy; not one can be changed by the imagination. It will be no fiction when we come to die; it will be no delusive pageant when we stand at the judgment-seat. *A. B.*

9. The nature of man is to adore God and to love what is godlike in man. The office of the tongue is to bless. Slander is guilty because it

contradicts your nature ; to speak ill of others makes you a monster in God's world ; get the habit of slander, and then there is not a stream which bubbles fresh from the heart of nature, there is not a tree that silently brings forth its genial fruit in its appointed season, which does not rebuke and proclaim you to be a monstrous anomaly in God's world. F. W. R.—The spirit of detraction in this day has wide scope. Literature and politics, as well as social life with its rivalries, are infested by it, and it finds its way into the Church and threatens us all. The race of fault-finders we have always with us, blind as moles to beauties and goodness, but lynx-eyed for failings, and finding meat and drink in proclaiming them in tones of affected sorrow. This spirit is always accompanied by ignorance of one's own faults, which makes the man indulging it ludicrous. So our Lord would seem to intend by the figure of the mote and the beam. It takes a great deal of close peering to see a mote ; but the censorious man sees only the mote, and sees it out of scale. The mote magnified, and nothing but the mote, is his object ; and he calls this one-sided exaggeration "criticism," and prides himself on the accuracy of his judgment. He makes just the opposite mistake in his estimate of his own faults, if he sees them at all. We look at our neighbor's errors with a microscope, and at our own through the wrong end of a telescope, and see neither in their real magnitude. A. M.

10. Here are two *rejoicings*. The first is the *joy* which men feel when the righteous are prospered ; the second is the *shout of exultation* when base transgressors fall. M. S.

13. Whoever goes about tattling, from an excessive love of talk, with more or less propensity to slander, will inevitably reveal secrets. Putting him here over against the man of faithful spirit, Solomon implies that this talebearer has no faithfulness of spirit, but is altogether unreliable. H. C.—If we could part forever with the disposition of the talebearer, we should have parted with that which, more than anything else, confuses and perplexes and embitters human life. C. J. V.—It is most certain that ill tongues would be silent if ill ears were not open, and hence it was an apposite saying of the ancients that the *teller* and *hearer* of slander should both be hanged—the one by the *tongue*, and the other by the *ears*. South.

17. "The man who is merciful in character and to others will be practically so to himself ;" the sentiment being that whoever blesses others, being merciful in spirit and character, will be sure to get a rich reward to himself.

The very reaction upon himself is blessed ; the showing of mercy to others is a rich mercy to himself. And *vice versa*, whoever is cruel to others and savage in temper will torture his own flesh. The inevitable laws of our being compel this result. H. C.—A *cruel*, froward, ill-natured man *troubles his own flesh*, and so his sin becomes his punishment ; he starves for want of what he has because he has not a heart to use it, either for the good of others or for his own. He is vexatious to his nearest relations, that are and should be to him as his own flesh. Envy and malice and greediness of the world are the rottenness of the bones and the consumption of the flesh. H.

Surely the *recipients of mercy* should be *ministers of mercy* ; and the mercy which follows them in Divine bestowment should be the mercy they follow in human imitation. When He forgives, it is with no reservation. It is not a qualified thing, carrying with it some terrible adjunct which cuts off from the value of the gift, dimming its lustre and embittering its sweetness ; but it is clear and pure and rich, and comes streaming down from the heaven of heavens—a flood of light. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." And thus human mercy is to show itself without that cruel abatement—"I can forgive, but not forget." Frank, cordial, hearty, should be every pardon of another's offence ; thus carrying the stamp of heaven's mint upon it, and having in it a ring of love, as the coin of God. Stoughton.

18. "Deceitful wages" is here contrasted with "a sure reward." The wicked will fail of the reward they work for ; it will prove delusive. But the man who sows righteousness will reap accordingly a sure reward. These results follow from the laws of society ; and they are sure in the end, because God reigns to bless the righteous, to curse the wicked. H. C.

—**19.** *Life* is here affirmed to be the "reward" of one "that is steadfast in (sowing) righteousness," and *death* the "wages" earned by "the wicked" "that pursueth evil." B.—Sowing righteousness is never and nowhere lost labor. Every act done by God's grace and at His bidding is living and fruitful. It may appear to go out of sight, like seed beneath the furrow ; but it will rise again. Sow on, Christians ! Sight will not follow the seed far ; but when sight fails sow in faith, and you will reap in joy soon. Arnot.

Unspeakably intimate is the connection between this life and the life to come. Every act

that we perform, every word that we utter ; nay, every thought that we harbor, is doing its part to give shape and coloring to our eternal destiny. If we turn away from our Father in heaven, and choose for our gods sensual or intellectual pleasure, social position, wealth, power, or the applause of men, then there is nothing to prevent us. God respects the free agency with which He created us. But let us remember we must abide by our choice forever. As a man soweth so shall he also reap. * We shall find in another world that we have moulded our destiny with our own hands. *Wayland.*

God unerringly distributes responsibility and judgment. The beginnings of habit in the character are subtle and insidious. They may come from ten thousand sources, they may come from one. God knows how to appropriate to each author his share in the composition. Take an immoral person, and go back from manhood to infancy, unfolding the layers of his character as you go, and there is a distinct responsibility for each step of growth, and God traces it. That habit of swearing, lying, drinking, that involves or marks the child or man, had its definite source and steps of increase, the responsibility of which God appropriates, first to the teacher of the habit, second to the receiver and cherisher ; first to the person setting the example or alluring to the practice of evil, and second to the person following the example and practising the evil. And for each God will hold a reckoning, to each person God will distribute the harvest ; to the sower and the receiver ; to the sower in others' natures and the receiver into his own. And thus, as it is said of the good seed, that those who sow and those who reap shall rejoice together, so of the evil seed, those who sow and those who reap shall lament together ; for all are sowers and all are reapers, and we are solemnly warned not to be partakers of other men's sins. G. B. C.

The perfect fitting and finishing of the machinery of Providence to individual interests must be premised ; yet it is not less true that in almost every event of life the remote consequences vastly outweigh the proximate in actual amount of importance. Every man prospers, or is overthrown ; lives, or dies ; not for himself, but that he may sustain those around him ; or that he may give them place, and who shall attempt to measure the circle within which are comprised these extensive dependencies ? On principles even of mathematical calculation each individual of the human family may be demonstrated to hold in his hand the centre lines of an interminable web-work, on which are sus-

tained the fortunes of multitudes of his successors. These implicated consequences, if summed together, make up therefore a weight of human weal or woe that is reflected back with an incalculable momentum upon the lot of each. Every one is then bound to remember that the personal sufferings or peculiar vicissitudes or toils through which he is called to pass are to be estimated and explained only in an immeasurably small proportion if his single welfare is regarded, while their full price and value are not to be computed unless the drops of the morning dew could be numbered. I. T.

The moral influence of a holy life cannot be lost. Like the seed which the wind wafts into hidden glades and forest depths, where no sower's hand could reach to scatter it, the subtle germ of Christ's truth will be borne on the secret atmosphere of a holy life, into hearts which no preacher's voice could penetrate. When the tongue of men and angels would fail, there is an eloquence in living goodness which will often prove persuasive. For it is an inoffensive, unpretending, unobtrusive eloquence ; it is the eloquence of the soft sunshine when it expands the close-shut leaves and blossoms—a rude hand would but tear and crush them ; it is the eloquence of the summer heat when it basks upon the thick-ribbed ice—blows would but break it ; but beneath that softest, gentlest, yet most potent influence the hard impenetrable masses melt away. *Caird.*

We do not realize the importance of this unconscious part of our life ministry. It goes on continually. In every greeting we give to another on the street, in every moment's conversation, in every letter we write, in every contact with other lives, there is a subtle influence that goes from us that often reaches farther, and leaves a deeper impression than the things themselves that we are doing at the time. After all, it is life itself, sanctified life, that is God's holiest and most effective ministry in this world—pure, sweet, patient, earnest, unselfish, loving life. It is not so much what we *do* in this world as what we *are*, that tells in spiritual results and impressions. A good life is like a flower, which though it neither toil nor spin, yet ever pours out a rich perfume, and thus performs a holy ministry. J. R. M.

21. Though hand join in hand.

There is a strange and subtle fascination about numbers which tends to blind the mind to the sense of sin and danger. How much more natural and agreeable it seems to go in the way the multitude are going. How much more confidence one has in his own position when

he sees that he is one of a great company. Tell him he is on the wrong road, and his heart, if not his head, will reply: "It cannot be; I am not alone. Here are the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant. Here is much of the best culture and learning of the ages. Here, too, are the young, the fair, the jubilant—all with me. It cannot be that this great, busy, joyous company is going to the bad." Sin loses its ugly look when committed by a majority. Individual responsibility becomes lost in the sense of the crowd. Nevertheless we read that, 'though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.' *James Brand.*

22. Beauty without the good sense which insures propriety of deportment finds here a homely but a most truthful and telling illustration! The Oriental fashion of wearing jewels, pendent from the nose as well as from the ears, made this proverb the more caustic. H. C. —Personal beauty is not a thing to be despised. It is a work of God, and none of His works are done in vain. It is obvious that human kind are the chief of God's works on earth, and that in the human form is displayed the highest beauty of creation. Beauty is a talent, and has a power. If the heart be holy and the aim true, personal beauty will enlarge the sphere and double the resources of beneficence. For discipline to human souls in time, deformity is given to one and beauty to another. The chief consideration for each is how she may best bear the trial, so as to get it enlisted among the workers for good and instruments of saving. If it were our part to judge, most of us would think it probable that beauty is the greater trial, and that under it a greater proportion stumble and fall. *Arnot.*

23. The desire of the righteous will end in good or blessing; for God blesses the obedient. The wicked, too, have desire or expectations; but they will end in bringing upon them the wrath of God or punishment. M. S.

24. "Scattering" abroad (in benevolence, for the good of others) does not impoverish. Men may give liberally, and through God's blessing upon them their wealth may increase. So on the other hand, one withholds more than is just and right, but only to his greater poverty. It cannot be wise to ignore the providence of God. And His will is to honor those who honor Him, and to put His mark of disapproval on those by whom He is lightly esteemed. H. C.

To distribute portions of our wealth in schemes and acts of wise philanthropy, is like

casting into the ground as seed a proportion of the last year's harvest. It goes out of your sight for the moment, but it will spring in secret and come back to your own bosom like manna from heaven. *Arnot.*

That scattereth yet increaseth.

The law of sowing and reaping is alike in every field. Gain is by scattering rather than by hoarding. He who lives for self will in the end have only self to live for; while he who lives for others will sooner or later have others living for him. Love begets love. He who uses his money has more money—more of the best results of money and more of its true enjoyment—than he who holds his money. It is not what we have, but what we do with that which we have, that is the real measure of our wealth—of our material wealth; of our mental wealth; of our heart wealth. The poorest possible investment of any talent whatsoever is hiding it in a safe place. Sowing it in a field is better than sewing it in a napkin. H. C. T. —Spiritual gifts are given for trading with. In other words, they are not so much blessings to the possessor as his stock-in-trade, which he can employ for the Master's enrichment. We are all tempted to think of them mostly as given us for our own blessing and joy; and the reminder is never unseasonable that a Christian receives nothing for himself alone. God hath shined into our hearts, that we may give to others the light of the knowledge which has flashed glad day into our darkness. The right use of His gifts increases them in our hands. The five talents grow to ten, the two to four. The surest way to increase our possession of Christ's grace is to try to impart it. There is no better way of strengthening our own faith than to seek to make others share in it. Christian convictions, spoken, are confirmed, but muffled in silence are weakened. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth." A. M.

The very act of scattering breaks up the mastery of selfishness, enlarges the circle of kindly interests, shows that there is something in the world beyond our own personal concerns. It were better therefore for man, better as a discipline, better for his heart, better for every quality that is worth having, that a man should throw some of his money into the river than that he should never give anything away. Even if a man should get nothing back he always increases in heart volume, in joy, in love, in peace; his cup of comfort is sweetened, he walks on a greener earth, and looks up to God through a bluer sky. Beneficence is its own compensation. Charity empties the heart of one

gift that it may make room for a larger. J. P. —The more intelligence we scatter, the more we have ourselves ; the more grace we impart, the more grace remains ; the more prayers we offer, the more our disposition and ability to pray, and the richer the return into our bosoms. Scatter your prayers, your labors, your money, your soul and body, throw them forth, hand them round at the command of the Lord, among the great congregation for which He came, and toiled and died, and when He sits on the throne of His glory, to receive to Himself those who have borne and had patience, and for His name's sake have labored and not fainted, but scattered their every trust for the life of the dying, then will He receive you, with that benediction which He pours on those who visited Him in prison and in sickness, who appeased His hunger and quenched His thirst, and clothed His nakedness, and took Him in when a stranger—"Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." R. T.

Withholding tends to poverty. A man may grow poor by meanly sparing what he has, *withholding more than is meet*, not paying just debts, not relieving the poor, not providing what is convenient for the family, not allowing necessary expenses for the preservation of the goods ; this *tends to poverty* ; it cramps men's industry, weakens their interest, destroys their credit, and forfeits the blessing of God ; and let men be ever so saving of what they have, if God blast it and blow upon it, it comes to nothing. H.

Charity begins at home is one of the sayings with which selfishness tries to mask its own deformity. The name of charity is in such repute, that to be without it is to be ill-spoken of. What, then, can the self-ridden do except pervert the name, so that selfishness may seem to be a branch of it ? The charity which begins at home is pretty sure to end there. It has such ample work within doors, it flags and grows faint the moment it gets out of them. J. C. Hare.—The most pitiable thing we run upon in the midst of this age of wealth is parsimony. It is difficult to understand the state of mind of a man or woman who, with abundant means far beyond personal or family necessity, practises a stinting economy of which even the generous poor would be ashamed. There is no meaner vice than miserliness. It is the most degraded type of fetishism. It kills out all capacity for higher and purer enjoyment. Where it is applied to any kind of business

which depends upon public good-will, it is ruinous. The men who found great business houses are careful and economical, but they are generous, liberal. There is that withholdeth and it tendeth to poverty. *Interior.*

God loveth a cheerful giver. And man loveth a cheerful giver, too. There is a great deal in the way we give, whether it be money, or sympathy, or kindly words, or loving looks, or enforced refusals. It is pleasanter to have a rebuke or a denial from some persons than to receive a compliment or a favor from another. Cheerfulness is out of the heart. Heartiness in word or in look is always cheering and inspiring. Nothing that is given grudgingly is pleasing to God or man. H. C. T.—If thou *givest* to receive the like, it is exchange ; if to receive more, it is covetousness ; if to receive thanks, it is vanity ; if to be seen, it is vain-glory ; if to corrupt, it is bribery ; if for example, it is formality ; if for compassion, it is charity ; if because thou art commanded, it is obedience. The affection in doing the work gives a name to the work done. *Quarles.*

25. The liberal soul shall be made fat : and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. The soul of blessing (Hebrew), *i.e.*, the soul that blesses others shall be enriched thereby—a proverb which follows in thought the first clause of the verse preceding. It is not only more blessed to give than to withhold ; it is even more blessed to give than to receive. H. C.—*There is no happiness in having or in getting, but only in giving.* And half the world is on the wrong scent in the pursuit of happiness. They think it consists in having and getting, and in being served by others. It consists in giving and in serving others. He that would be great among you, said Christ, let him serve. He that would be happy, let him remember that there is but one way—it is more blessed, it is more happy, to give than to receive. H. Drummond.

He who gives is improving his own character ; and for this reason "it is more blessed to give than to receive." The man who gives is advancing in excellence and moral virtue. While he is doing good to others, he is doing greater good to himself. He is rising higher and higher above the disease and contagion which is spreading around in those who regard not the glory of God. He rises above what is mean and sordid, and mingles with the most pure and holy part of the creation of God. The most benevolent are the most likely to make swift advances in that holiness which is the preparation for heaven. He who is laboring, from a proper

motive, to benefit those around him, who is sacrificing his time and talents to increase the welfare of his fellow-men, is approaching more rapidly to perfection than any other. *R. Hull.*
—In defiance of all the torture and malice and might of the world, the *liberal* man will ever be rich, for God's providence is his estate, God's wisdom and power his defence, God's love and favor his reward, and God's Word his security. *Barrow.*

We shall do much when we love much, and we shall love much only when we see much of Christ—much of His heart and His work. The appeal throughout the Bible is Christ's love, Christ's doings, Christ's sufferings; when these come home to us as revealed in the past, when the unfoldings of the future open to us what Christ will do for us, then we have a solid basis on which we shall stand, and abounding impulses to abounding works. We must love much to do much. *J. Drummond.*

26. "That withholdeth" (*i.e.*, from the hungry who need bread), hoarding and holding for the sake of a higher price, taking advantage of the necessities of the breadless. Those breadless mouths will curse him, nor they alone, for they are of God's family, and *His* curse too must fall on them. On the other hand, the blessings of the poor (and of their Great Father no less) will come on the head of him that selleth it promptly in time of need, at fair and not at famine prices. Oh, might these words of God be emblazoned on every storehouse in all the land! Alas, that dealers in "corn" (all breadstuffs—indeed, all food) should so strangely ignore God's words, and so recklessly trample His promises and His threatenings beneath their feet! No wonder that financial reverses should come crashing down upon the speculator's ill-gotten gains! It is one of God's ways of fierce and terrible rebuke. The same principle applies to fuel, and to whatever else is a necessity to the subsistence or the comfort of the masses.

30. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, because it is a blessed moral influence toward the winning of souls from sin and ruin. The results of such labor are indeed a tree of life, a permanent source of blessing. *H. C.*
—The righteous are as *trees of life*; the fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples, and prayers, their interest in heaven, and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many; they are the ornaments of paradise, God's Church on earth, for

whose sake it stands. *H.*—Amid all the conflict of life, the righteous is approaching the purity of paradise, albeit with slow and often tottering steps; in principle, the power of sin is broken within him; and day by day he is renewed in the image of God through communion with Christ. Nay, amid all the instability of life, the fixedness of this paradise is already his in essence. He not merely expects it beyond the grave, but has it in principle already here. He thus actually possesses that which in the tree of life was only emblematically shadowed forth. *Van O.*

He that is wise winneth souls. *He that is wise*, by communicating his wisdom *wins souls*; wins upon them to bring them in love with God and holiness, and so wins them over into the interests of God's kingdom among men. The wise are said to *turn many to righteousness*, and that is the same with winning souls here (*Dan. 12 : 3*). They that would win souls have need of wisdom to know how to deal with them; and they that do win souls show that they are wise. *H.*—To win an immortal from sin and wrath to hope and holiness—this is honorable work and difficult. It is work for wise men, and we lack wisdom. On this point there is a special promise from God. Those who need wisdom and desire to use it in this work will get it for the asking. *Arnot.*

The personal soul is the one thing which continuously and immortally lives; which outlasts the body; which lives when the stately house has fallen, and the splendid fortune has been scattered; which lives when the theory that once was accepted has been surpassed and forgotten, and the policy of the statesman has passed from men's sight; which outlasts even the world itself, and the stars in heaven, on which the earth is poised and hangs; which lives while God Himself continues, and while His government continues to be exercised over intelligent moral beings. And he who devotes himself to accomplishing a work upon this personal human soul—that shall be for its essential welfare—undertakes a work that must be enduring and not brief; a work that must abide in its fruits when all the precarious enterprises of man, whereby he is surrounded, shall have come to their gradual or sudden termination. *R. S. Storrs.*—If we work upon marble, it will perish. If we work upon brass, time will efface. If we rear temples, they will crumble into dust. But if we work upon immortal minds—if we imbue them with right principles—with the just fear of God and their fellow-men, we engrave upon those tablets some-

thing which no time can efface, but which will brighten to all eternity. In this way we may all be artists, and even the most ordinary and unlearned, if he has but a loving heart, may produce a masterpiece. *Daniel Webster.*

The highest and the lowest blessings for life, both of heart and mind—blessedness and love, and wisdom and goodness—are ministered to men through men, and to live without dependence on human help and guidance is to be either a savage or an angel. God's guidance does not make man's needless, for a very large part of God's guidance is ministered to us through men. And wherever a man's thoughts and words teach us to understand God's thoughts and words more clearly, to love them more earnestly, or to obey them more gladly, there human guidance is discharging its noblest function. A. M.—So far as we know, no lost sinner is brought to repentance and faith save through one who already believes. It is the Holy Spirit who draws souls to Christ, yet the Spirit works through believers on unbelievers. We see thus a hint of our responsibility for the saving of the lost souls that our soul touches. There are those who will never be saved unless we do our part to save them. Our responsibility is commensurate with our opportunity. J. R. M.

31. The word rendered "recompense" applies to both good deeds and bad. The proverb calls attention to the fact that the righteous experience a measure of recompense (retribu-

tion) in this world, and infers that the wicked must, with more certainty or more palpably, receive a measure of theirs. The writer does not necessarily imply that the recompense of either class is to be finished, made perfect, in this world, and by no means denies that a part, even the greater part, holds over to the future world. H. C.—There are some recompenses *in the earth*, in this world, and in the things of this world, which prove that *verily there is a God that judges in the earth* (Psalm 58 : 11), but they are not universal ; many sins go unpunished in the earth and services unrewarded, which indicates that there is a judgment to come, and that there will be more exact and full retributions in the future state. Many times *the righteous are recompensed* for their righteousness here *in the earth*, though that is not the principal much less the only reward either intended for them or intended by them ; but whatever the Word of God has promised them or the wisdom of God sees good for them, they shall have *in the earth*. *The wicked also, and the sinner*, are sometimes remarkably punished in this life ; nations, families, particular persons. And if the righteous, who do not deserve the least reward, yet have part of their recompense here on earth, much more shall the wicked, who deserve the greatest punishment, have part of their punishment on earth as an earnest of worse to come. Therefore *stand in awe, and sin not*. If those have two heavens that merit none, much more shall they have two hells that merit both. H.

CHAPTER XII.

- 1 Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge :
But he that hateth reproof is brutish.
- 2 A good man shall obtain favour of the
LORD :
But a man of wicked devices will he condemn.
- 3 A man shall not be established by wickedness :
But the root of the righteous shall never be moved.
- 4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband :
But she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.
- 5 The thoughts of the righteous are just :
But the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

- 6 The words of the wicked are of lying in wait for blood :
But the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.
- 7 The wicked are overthrown, and are not :
But the house of the righteous shall stand.
- 8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom :
But he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.
- 9 Better is he that is lightly esteemed, and hath a servant,
Than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.
- 10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast :

But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

11 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread :

But he that followeth after vain *persons* is void of understanding.

12 The wicked desireth the net of evil men :

But the root of the righteous yieldeth *fruit*.

13 In the transgression of the lips is a snare to the evil man :

But the righteous shall come out of trouble.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth :

And the doings of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

15 The way of the foolish is right in his own eyes :

But he that is wise hearkeneth unto counsel.

16 A fool's vexation is presently known :

But a prudent man concealeth shame.

17 He that uttereth truth sheweth forth righteousness,

But a false witness deceit.

18 There is that speaketh rashly like the piercings of a sword :

But the tongue of the wise is health.

19 The lip of truth shall be established for ever :

But a lying tongue is but for a moment.

20 Deceit is in the heart of them that devise evil :

But to the counsellors of peace is joy.

21 There shall no mischief happen to the righteous :

But the wicked shall be filled with evil.

22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD :

But they that deal truly are his delight.

23 A prudent man concealeth knowledge :

But the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule :

But the slothful shall be put under task-work.

25 Heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop ;

But a good word maketh it glad.

26 The righteous is a guide to his neighbour :

But the way of the wicked causeth them to err.

27 The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting :

But the precious substance of men *is to* the diligent.

28 In the way of righteousness is life ;

And in the pathway thereof there is no death.

3. In the figure underlying this proverb men are compared to trees. The righteous man gets well rooted, stands strong, thrives well, and is never moved ; but the wicked never get a firm footing and rooting, but are blown down, torn up by the roots and left to rot. God is against them. H. C.

4. No ethical manual would be complete, unless it assigned to woman, as well as man, her right position in the social order. In her excellence is the crown and glory of a man's life. No picture of ideal happiness is brighter than that of a home which is thus made perfect with the clear brightness of true union (5 : 15-20). The "prudent wife" is thought of as one of God's best gifts (19 : 14), "building her house" (14 : 1) on the only true foundation. Her influence on her children is as great as that of their father, if not greater (1 : 8 ; 6 : 20). They owe what they have of goodness to her loving persuasion. E. H. P.

7. Wicked overthrown and are not. There is a hope that bad men will finally be themselves extirpated and literally perish. But nothing is really annihilated in them save the celestial possibilities. A living creature remains—a mind, a memory, a heart of passion, fears, irritability, will—all these remain ; noth-

ing is gone but the angel life that stood with them, and bound them all to God. What remains, remains ; and, for aught that we can see, must remain ; and there is the fatal, inevitable fact. H. B.

10. Regardeth ; literally, "knoweth." The words remind us that all true sympathy and care must grow out of knowledge. The righteous man tries to *know* the feelings and life even of the brute beast, and so comes to care for it. **Tender mercies ;** better, "the feelings, the emotions," all that should have led to mercy and pity toward man. The circle expands in the one case, narrows in the other. E. H. P.

11. The Hebrews were an agricultural people, subsisting from their soil. Their dense population demanded the best of tillage. This Solomon aimed to encourage. He who, instead of working his land, followed after idle men, out of business and doing nothing to purpose for the ends of life, would show himself without understanding, would play the fool, and would righteously come short of bread. Such men *ought* to go breadless. H. C.

14. *Fruit of the mouth* is what the mouth speaks. The supposition is that a righteous man speaks in harmony with his character.

This shall bring him abundant good. Also what he *does*, as well as *says*, will not be useless. *The reward of his hands, i.e.*, the reward of what his hands have done, *He (Jehovah) will return to him.* M. S.—The lips that speak well are no less sure of reward than the hands that work well. To show this the former is put over against the latter—lips against hands—with perhaps a shade of preference for the lips as the more fruitful of good.

15. The gist of the proverb is that the way of the fool is so very right in his own eyes that he will not hearken to counsel. Harkening to good counsel is the characteristic, not of the fool but of the wise. Self-conceit dooms a man to folly and to its consequent mischiefs.

18. The tongue of the wise gives healing; their words lovingly heal the very wounds which the babbling slanderer inflicts. There is a precious balm in such words. Wise and good men take care not merely that they wound no one's feelings, but that they heal the wounds which they see inflicted by others. How much society owes to such healing words! H. C. —Use your gift of speech to give comfort, joy, cheer and hope to all about you. Use it to encourage the weary and disheartened, to warn those who are treading in paths of danger, to inspire the lethargic and indolent with high and holy motives, to kindle the fires of heavenly aspiration on cold heart-altars. J. R. M.

19. The law which binds us to veracity is the law of nature and the voice of God. It is the cement of the social edifice, the principle which unites the members of that body of which mankind consists; and if charity may be compared to the blood which circulates through the system, truth must be considered as the joints and ligaments which connect the respective parts. Intentional falsehood is, in every instance, a breach of this fundamental law, impairs the union, and is a violation of our duty, not merely in a private capacity, but as citizens of the world. By poisoning the stream of social intercourse at its source, by impairing the stock of public confidence, it tends to a dissolution of the whole body. Into the private intercourse of life, wherever it prevails, it infuses a mortal poison, robs it of its security, and converts it from an instrument of good into a snare. Where confidence ought to reign, it spreads suspicion and alarm; while, under the pretence of self-defence, it propagates itself. Artifice is opposed to artifice, falsehood is encountered by falsehood, till all the tender charities of life are violated. R.

Hall. — Veracity facilitates and simplifies every business and every intercourse. A host of useless words and precautionary forms are thereby dispensed with; words and response, summons and deed, follow each other in secure succession; mind and mind meet, recognize, and commune with each other; all good, fair deeds thrive in such secure, untroubled, spiritual communion; power meets power, will joins will, resolve follows resolve, and confidence bears on and raises all with unfaltering steadfastness; all the flowers of mind, science, art, religion, thrive in the pure, healthful air of truthfulness; the light of heaven is shed undimmed upon life, and warms and fertilizes every germinating plant. *Colton.*

As a test of character, truthfulness is pre-eminent; it is the basis of all true manhood. Truth scorns all disguises, shuns all devices, and never postures for advantage or effect. Its spirit pervades the closest relations and highest intercourse; its law holds the planets in their course; it is the presiding principle of every true and noble life. The stability of national credit, of law, of justice, of commerce, of society, and of life itself, is established and maintained on principles of truth. It is the upholding law of nature, the bond of society, the essence of creeds, the germ of religion. It maintains its sway throughout the universe, and circumscribes the whole round of life. *II. Van Santvoord.* — The love of truth is the foundation of all solid excellence. It gives stability to character and distinguishes firmness from obstinacy. It makes the man of principle. You may be distinguished in the world without it, but you never can have the approbation of your own hearts or the smile of God. You never can perfect and adorn your natures. J. H. T.

22. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord. Falsehood has its deepest guilt and its certainty of punishment in this, that it crosses God's will, contradicts His character, and is hateful to His feeling. The wise man does not charge it upon lying lips, as he might, that they are an injury to men; he strikes deeper and tells us the more alarming secret that they are abomination to the Lord. By the Gospel every moral obligation is traced up to its source in the mind of God; the duties of society are all duties first to the Creator; and the highest motive for the simplest act of justice is to honor God, or conformity to His will. And as this is the loftiest view of the subject, so we shall find it is the most practical. The mind is so constituted in itself, that it is impressed with a fresh and fearful sense of

what a falsehood is, the moment it realizes that the falsehood is a contradiction of God. No matter how trivial the occasion, or how remote the matter of the lie may be from all the high concerns of heaven, it is told in the full presence and plain hearing of our Judge. All is open up to the Great White Throne, and the false tongue is speaking to its Maker. He hears it, and it is an abomination to Him. The lie may prosper for its purpose. The multitudinous waves of traffic roll on with their noise, and the good bargain, closed by the deceit, thrives without rebuke; the child escapes the punishment he deserved and forgets the sin; the slanderous speaker's point tells, and his candidate goes in; the swift stream of social gossip and mirth makes no pause when the flippant or envious tongue insults the unseen Auditor who is listening; but *He is listening*, and after the lights are all out, the school-room locked, the election over, and the market still—the falsehood remains stamped in letters which some time or other will look intensely bright, as if they were written with fire because it was an abomination to the Lord F. D. H.

Make conscience of truth, not only in our words, but in all our actions; because those that *deal truly* and sincerely in all their dealings are *His delight*, and He is well pleased with them. We delight to converse with and make use of those that are honest, and that we may put a confidence in; such, therefore, let us be, that we may recommend ourselves to the favor both of God and man. H.

25. "Heaviness" is rather anxiety, fear, that which gives a sense of heaviness. Such a sense of dread, foreboding evil, depresses the heart, bows it down; but a cheering word gladdens it. This "good word" may be either good tidings, or a word whose comfort is in its kindly tone and manner. At how little cost sometimes may great burdens of grief be lifted from sad hearts! H. C.—Sorrow of all kinds depresses, but solicitude is worst. Hence the saying it is not work but worry that kills men. The secret of health, success, happiness, and often of long life, is obedience to the apostolic direction, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer," etc. (Phil. 4:6). *Chambers.*

Speak but a kind word, the work of a moment, and it shall cause the heavy heart to sing

for joy; and gentle reproof or earnest persuasion, a mere fragment of thought and of time, may convert a sinner from the error of his way and save a soul from death. Gather up the fragments of influence, of time, of opportunity; and gather up the fragments of your worldly possessions that nothing be lost. For in the exercise of a praiseworthy and heaven-approved carefulness and economy and a conscientious expenditure, we should for the most part soon come to owe no man anything but love. R. T.

26. The righteous man shows his neighbor the way rightly; but the way pointed out by the wicked man leads him astray. The righteous man is a safe guide; the wicked man is not, but will lead you wrong. H. C.—Even men without principle will be restrained by the example of the good. When Lord Peterborough lodged for a season with Fenelon, the piety and virtue of the latter had such effect upon the nobleman that he exclaimed at parting, "If I stay here any longer I shall become a Christian in spite of myself." It is thus that the example of a holy life or an evil life multiplies itself. We are addressed by it as imitative beings, breathing the atmosphere and catching up the opinions that surround us. Even while we gaze upon it we feel its transforming power. It is insensibly imprinting its image on our hearts. We become accustomed to it, and if it be hateful, gradually lose our repugnance to it. E. H. G.

27. The *substance of a diligent man*, though it be not great, perhaps, *is yet precious*. It comes from the blessing of God; he has comfort in it; it does him good and his family. It is his own daily bread, not bread out of other people's mouths, and therefore he sees God gives it him in answer to his prayer. H.

28. In the way of righteousness is life; and . . . no death. "Life" in its highest and best sense, pure, perfect blessedness. No death is in that traveller's path. It opens to a glorious immortality. H. C.—This is the sum and substance of the chapter, and a proper conclusion of all that we have been taught in the foregoing maxims of Divine philosophy—namely, that religion and a holy conversation are the only sure and infallible way to happiness. So excellent, and so far beyond every other scheme, is this "way of righteousness." *Wogan.*

CHAPTER XIII.

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| <p>1 A WISE son <i>heareth</i> his father's instruction :
But a scorner heareth not rebuke.</p> <p>2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth :
But the soul of the treacherous <i>shall eat</i> violence.</p> <p>3 He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life :
<i>But</i> he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.</p> <p>4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing :
But the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.</p> <p>5 A righteous man hateth lying :
But a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.</p> <p>6 Righteousness guardeth him that is upright in the way :
But wickedness overthroweth the sinner.</p> <p>7 There is that maketh [or, <i>feigneth</i>] himself rich, yet hath nothing :
There is that maketh [or, <i>feigneth</i>] himself poor, yet hath great wealth.</p> <p>8 The ransom of a man's life is his riches :
But the poor heareth no threatening.</p> <p>9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth :
But the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.</p> <p>10 By pride cometh only contention :
But with the well advised is wisdom.</p> <p>11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished :
But he that gathereth by labour shall have increase.</p> <p>12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick :
But when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.</p> <p>13 Whoso despiseth the word bringeth destruction on himself :</p> | <p>But he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.</p> <p>14 The law of the wise is a fountain of life,
To depart from the snares of death.</p> <p>15 Good understanding giveth favour :
But the way of the treacherous is rugged.</p> <p>16 Every prudent man worketh with knowledge :
But a fool spreadeth out folly.</p> <p>17 A wicked messenger falleth into evil :
But a faithful ambassador is health.</p> <p>18 Poverty and shame <i>shall be to</i> him that refuseth correction :
But he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.</p> <p>19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul :
But it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil.</p> <p>20 Walk with wise men, and thou shalt be wise :
But the companion of fools shall smart for it.</p> <p>21 Evil pursueth sinners :
But the righteous shall be recompensed with good.</p> <p>22 A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children ;
And the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the righteous.</p> <p>23 Much food <i>is in</i> the tillage of the poor :
ut there is that is destroyed by reason of injustice.</p> <p>24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son :
But he that loveth him chasteneth him be- times.</p> <p>25 The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul :
But the belly of the wicked shall want.</p> |
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3. HE hath a mighty command over his spirit that can command his tongue, especially when he is provoked. It is a real part of perfection not to offend in word. . . . There is a speedy passage between the heart and the tongue. Evil thoughts are soon formed up into evil words. *Caryl.*

Idle speaking is precisely the beginning of all hollowness, halfness, unfaithfulness ; the atmosphere in which rank weeds of every kind attain the mastery over noble fruits in man's life, and utterly choke them out ; one of the most crying maladies of these days, to be testi-

fied against and in all ways to the uttermost withstood. Thou who wearest that cunning, heaven-made organ, a tongue, think well of this. Speak not, I passionately entreat thee, till thy thought have silently matured itself, till thou have other than mad and mad-making noises to emit ; hold thy tongue till *some* meaning lie behind. No idlest word thou speakest but is a seed cast into time, and grows through all eternity ! The recording angel, consider it well, is no fable, but the truest of truths. *Carlyle.*

It is a startling fact that so large a propor-

tion of the preceptive part of the Bible should deal with sins of the tongue, and deal with them so severely. Extract all the verses of the Book of Proverbs which have reference to foolish talk, bad talk, or too much talk ; and you will have a very large number of verses. Add to these the precepts of Paul forbidding corrupt communication, and prescribing speech with grace seasoned with salt. Close the list with that paragraph of James' Epistle, which forms the body of the third chapter, and which speaks in such awful terms of the widespread mischief done by sins of the tongue, and with that later passage of the same epistle, in which the apostle reiterates with emphasis the caution against swearing contained in the Sermon on the Mount, " But above all things, my brethren, swear not ;" and you have not only a portion of space devoted to this subject which seems to mere reason disproportionate to its merits ; but also, which is more remarkable, the warnings against this class of sin are more deeply serious in tone than those against almost any other. E. M. G.

4. The indolent are self-indulgent ; indolence is self-indulgence. The indolent cannot be amused by innocent relaxation. They are already relaxed. The indolent have no sufficient appreciation of the rights of others. They are accustomed to live, with little or no effort, on the fruits of the labors of those about them. It thus becomes a habit of mind with them to think of things and pleasures and persons as belonging to themselves. It is hardly possible for the indolent not to fall into debauch. It is their only refuge from *ennui*. *Bascom*.—Most true is this proverb in spiritual things. If the soul of the sluggard should be filled according to his desires, the fulness would not remain with him ; it would be soon gone. There is no principle of life, no habit of faith, no element of a Divine nature, to turn what it receives into an everlasting part and possession of itself. Neither is there any disposition, in such a case, to go from strength to strength, from one degree of grace and glory to another ; but a sluggish, inactive contentment, like that of a lazy, inefficient man, who would rather live idly by begging than help himself. G. B. C.

6. Those that are *upright in their way*, that mean honestly in all their actions, adhere conscientiously to the sacred and eternal rules of equity, and deal sincerely both with God and man, their integrity will keep them. The temptations of Satan shall not prevail over them, the reproaches and injuries of evil men shall not fasten upon them to do them any real

mischief. Those that are wicked, even their wickedness will be their overthrow at last, and they are held in the cords of it in the mean time. Are they corrected, destroyed ? It is their own wickedness that corrects them ; that destroys them ; they alone shall bear it. H. —Every sin has its appropriate punishment here in this world ; not always visible, perhaps not always even certain, but yet always in prospect and almost always inflicted. Sins of appetite generally bring fearful punishment on the body ; sins of indolence bring bitter regret for wasted time, loss of due place, inability to reach just and natural hopes, sometimes terrible privation ; sins of untruth bring loss of all respect and honor, and deep self-contempt ; each sin can be traced out to consequences enough to appall the doer on the very threshold of his folly, if he could but see them full before him. *Bishop Temple*.

If a man will serve his sin, let him at least reckon upon this, that in one way or other it will be ill with him ; his sin will find him out ; his path will be hard ; there will be to him no peace. The night of concealment may be long, but dawn comes like the Erinnyes to reveal and avenge its crimes. Not only is his punishment inevitable, but it is natural ; not miraculous, but ordinary ; not sudden, but gradual ; not accidental, but necessary ; not exceptional, but invariable. Retribution is the impersonal evolution of an established law. Retribution takes the form which of all others the sinner would passionately deprecate, for it is homogeneous with the sins on whose practice it ensues. *Farrar*.—Sin and the consequences of sin show a terrible power of possible accumulation. The transgression of some one of the seemingly little things of God's law may apparently bring with it no direct evil consequences to the transgressor, or at least none that may not be, for a time, evaded. But the dues of sin mount up in a grim compound interest that knows no necessary ending, and the little thing of to-day becomes the avalanche of to-morrow. It is possible to treasure up for one's self wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God—and God's bank never fails. All that has been treasured up will be paid, with all the accumulations of the years. S. S. T.

The disclosure of transgression is sooner or later inevitable. There can be no burial of it so deep that in due time it will not have a resurrection. The voice that tells is somewhere. The stain is somewhere. The sore and shame are somewhere. The avenger is some-

where. The eternal right is over all. Out of the darkness and silence ; out of the misguided zeal of friends ; out of the eagerness of the guilty to seem indifferent and unconscious ; out of the patience and sufferings of the wronged ; out of the very emphasis of denial fortified by favorable public opinion ; out of all concealments and subterfuges, will come eventually the revelation, the confession. There is no special miracle in all this, however singular seems the disclosure, but an eternal miracle through the righteous and perfect methods of God. *Powers*.—It is this inevitable Nemesis, this certainty that men will reap what they have sown, this exposition of the naked hideousness of wrong-doing, this vileness of sin, breaking through all the glitter of success and all the glare of present prosperity, wealth, or power ; in a word, the just judgment of God written by the finger of God upon the wall, or declared by the voice of God from the pulpits of His truth, that men so obstinately close their ears and shut their eyes to, but which the Word of God so resolutely declares. It is the teacher's office to proclaim it, to enforce it, to urge it, to insist upon it, whether men hear or whether they forbear. *Bishop Hervey*.

Use sin as it will use you ; spare it not, for it will not spare you ; it is your murderer and the murderer of the whole world. Use it, therefore, as a murderer should be used ; kill it before it kills you ; and though it bring you to the grave, as it did your Head, it shall not be able to keep you there. You love not death ; love not the cause of death. *Baxter*.

7. Both cases retain that peculiar meaning of the conjugation which designates *pretence, show*. Both classes of such men are hypocrites and deceivers ; the one for pretending to possess what he does not possess, the other for pretending to be worth nothing (in order to cheat his creditors), when in fact he is rich. Sentiment : “ Men will often play the hypocrite for the sake of gain.” M. S.—In Oriental countries, where property is often unsafe, men might be tempted to conceal their wealth and put on the appearance of extreme poverty. The other extreme, the pretence of great wealth, is more often assumed for the sake of honor and distinction. H. C.

9. The light of the righteous. The happiness of the righteous shines like the sun and increases to their endless joy ; but the happiness of the wicked is as feeble as the light of a candle, and will soon be extinguished. *Bishop Patrick*.—Very beautiful in its poetry is the idea of the light *rejoicing* in its brightness. Na-

ture itself, the sun in its glory, the stars in their courses sing for joy and rejoice. The distinction between the “ light ” and the “ lamp ” is also not without significance. The righteous have the true light in them. That which belongs to the wicked is but derived and temporary, and shall be extinguished before long. E. H. P. (See 4 : 18.)

10. Pride is a bad mother of many bad children, these three especially : First, boasting of ourselves ; secondly, contending with others ; thirdly, despising of others. *Caryl*.—Contention only and nothing better than contention can be expected from pride. Pride will produce it. Pride is the chief occasion of strife. H. C.

Whatever hand other lusts may have in contention (passion, envy, covetousness), pride has the great hand ; pride will itself sow discord, and needs no help. Pride makes men impatient of contradiction in either their opinions or their desires, impatient of competition and rivalry, impatient of concession and receding, from a conceit of certain right and truth on their side ; and hence arise quarrels among relations and neighbors, quarrels in States and kingdoms, in churches and Christian societies. Men will be revenged, will not forgive, because they are proud. Those that are humble and peaceable are wise and *well advised*. Those that will ask and take advice, that will consult their own consciences, their Bibles, their friends, and will do nothing rashly, they are wise, as in other things so in this, that they will humble themselves, will stoop and yield, to preserve quietness and prevent quarrels. H.—The humble man as he pays due respect to others to the full, and so gives no kind of quarrel that way, so he challenges no such debt to himself, and thus avoids the usual contests that arise in this. Study, therefore, this excellent grace of humility, not the personated acting of it in appearance, which may be a chief agent for pride, but true lowliness of mind, to be nothing in your own eyes, and content to be so in the eyes of others. *Leighton*.

11. *Vanity, nothingness*, is a peculiar word for *slight effort*, or *no effort*. The meaning is : “ Wealth which is in any way obtained without industry or effort.” Nothing is more true than that this is often squandered in a little time. But that which is gathered by industry, which is collected by *handfuls*, is commonly of that stable character which secures increase. M. S.—That which is got by industry and honesty will grow more, instead of growing less ; it will be a maintenance, it will be an in-

heritance, it will be an abundance. *He that labors, working with his hands, shall so increase,* as that he shall *have to give to him that needs* (Eph. 4 : 28), and when it comes to that it will increase yet more and more. H.—The common law, the general fact, is that all other wealth except that in which the hand bears the prominent agency, both in procuring and preserving it, soon flees away, “quicker than a breath,” says the strong figure of the proverb. H. C.

Good, of various kinds, may come *to us* without our toiling ; but it was not produced without somebody's toiling. This is the law of that primal sentence, that everything valuable which man possesses shall be the fruit of the diligent hand. Then *the laborer* is the only and universal benefactor ! He is monarch and dispenser of all earthly gifts ! The artisan's low bench is a throne ! *Stone.*

12. “We live by hope.” When the realization of it is long deferred, the heart sinks with discouragement. *Tree of life* is a vivid image of the *animating power* of hope when it is fulfilled. M. S.—Nothing is more grateful than to enjoy that, at last, which we have long wished and waited for. *When the desire does come* it puts men into a sort of paradise, a garden of pleasure, for *it is a tree of life*. It will aggravate the eternal misery of the wicked that their hopes will be frustrated ; and it will make the happiness of heaven the more welcome to the saints, that it is what they have earnestly longed for as the crown of their hopes. H.

13. He who despiseth God's Word shall be *held* responsible—held as *with a cord* (the sense of the Hebrew) from which there can be no escape ; but he who reverently fears and obeys it shall be recompensed. H. C.

15. In v. 15 the familiar sentiment, “the way of transgressors is hard,” which certainly in itself is a just and weighty sentiment, becomes “the way of the treacherous is rugged,” which fairly represents the original. The latter word is equivalent to *harsh, rough, or painful*. According to the proverbial usage of our own day, the transgressor has “a hard road to travel.” They do not think so who set out on that road, but they change their minds before they get to the end. *Chambers.*

Such is our nature, that God cannot make us happy or better till He has first sickened us with the things we prefer to Him. Behold, then, the goodness of God in making the “way of transgressors rugged ;” in hedging with thorns the way to perdition ; in defeating our plans of worldly repose ; in all the experience

He gives to make us feel that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth ! Should He do less than make ours a life of affliction, while it is one of disservice to Him, the proofs of His benevolence toward us would be wholly obscured. H. H.

18. “Reproof” has the broad sense of instruction and good counsel, designed to make one better. He who faithfully observes such counsels will come to honor. His character and life will be improved, his faults corrected, and then all will esteem and honor him. The opposite course will end not in shame only, but in poverty—a consideration adapted to take hold of the heart. H. C.

19. The contrast here implies that the first clause has respect to the *desire of the wise*. This, it is taken for granted, is for good ; and when that good is attained, then is it grateful to the spirit of a good man. On the other hand, fools cling with such tenacity to evil, that they will not quit it so as to cherish such desires. M. S.—The gist of the proverb lies in what is *implied* (not expressed) in the latter clause. All men, whether fools or wise, appreciate and long for the joy of gratified desire. But fools who abhor departing from evil *cannot get it*. Their life is a perpetual but fruitless endeavor to overcome and counterveil the laws that link together sin and misery, folly and ruin. Abhorring to depart from evil, they must forever miss the joy of gratified desire.

20. The proverb testifies to the power of the social law—the potent influence of associates—the good for good, and the evil for evil, and its consequent ruin. H. C.—There are many strong Bible utterances respecting the moulding influences of daily companionship upon our life and character. Sometimes they dwell specially on the causes that draw men together, assuming that like chooses like, and that a man may in fact be known by his associates. But more frequently the texts warn us of the consequences of intimacy. They warn or exhort about companionship because we become, as they assume, what our companions are ; because men who live together in close contact and communion mould each other. *Percival.*—We are continually drawing and being drawn, impelling and resisting or yielding, assimilating ourselves to others, and others to ourselves ; nor is it possible to go into any company and come from it exactly in the same state of mind. The moral modification is perpetually going on ; and if we trace it exactly, we shall find that it is either evil or good ; very seldom, if ever, entirely indifferent or neutral.

It is one of the fundamental laws of nature, that our minds should be subject to perpetual modification from the minds of others ; nor is it within the reach of our will to determine whether this influence shall be exercised or not. Yet we may determine to what influence we subject it ; we may determine what society we will keep, but not what influence the society we choose shall have upon us. *R. Hall.*

A goodly friend is a choice book, out of which we may learn many excellent things, and a precious treasure, whereby our souls may be enriched with virtue : " He that walketh with the wise shall be wise." They who walk with them that are strong-scented with grace must needs receive somewhat of its savor. The very sight of that holiness which shineth brightly in their works will kindle thy spirit, and enlarge thy mind with an honest emulation of their worth. *Swinnock.*—Friendship maketh not only a fair day in the affections from storms and tempests ; but it maketh daylight in the understanding, out of darkness and confusion of thoughts. Whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits do clarify and break up in the communicating and discoursing with another, he tosseth his thoughts more easily, he marshalleth them more orderly, he seeth how they look when they are turned into words ; finally, he waxeth wiser than himself, and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. *Bacon.*

If there is any work in the world which peculiarly deserves the name of the work of the devil, it is the hindrance which men sometimes put in the path which their fellow-creatures are called by God to walk in. Of all the temptations which surround us in this world of temptations, the most difficult, in almost all cases, to deal with are those which our fellow-men cast in our way. Temptations of the devil, springing from within the soul, can generally be evaded, even if they seem irresistible in their direct encounter. Temptations from bodily appetite, the most terrible of all temptations in the moment of their power, can almost always be foreseen and a means of escape provided. But our duties will not let us quit the company of our fellows, and if they choose to tempt us, there is nothing left but to bear the temptation as best we may. The temptation is so sure to come that we must count upon it. It is the order of the world ; it is the fire in which we are to be tried ; it is the touchstone of our truth and our faith ; it is the experiment of our love ; it is the test by which our souls must be valued. But for all that there is no excuse for

the tempter. Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh ; woe to that man who makes himself the instrument of putting his brothers to their hardest probation. *F. T.*

21. This is only another way of saying that God will bring evil upon sinners and good to the obedient, implying perhaps that He has wrought more or less of essential retribution into the very nature of things and the laws of society. *H. C.*—**Pursueth sinners.** *Evil pursues* them close wherever they go, as the avenger of blood pursued the manslayer, and they have no city of refuge to flee to ; they attempt an escape, but in vain. Whom God pursues He is sure to overtake. *H.*—No closer doth the shadow follow the body than the revenge of self-accusation follows sin. Walk eastward in the morning, the shadow starts behind thee ; soon after it is upon thy left side ; at noon it is under thy feet ; lie down, it coucheth under thee ; toward even it leaps before thee. Thou canst not be rid of it while thou hast a body and the sunlight. No more can thy soul quit the conscience of evil, ever torturing thee with affrights of more pains than thy nature can comprehend. *Bishop H.*

Every day that a bad man lives he is a worse man. He is on a sloping descent. Imperceptibly but really, and not so very slowly either ; convictions are dying out, impulses to good are becoming feeble, habits of neglect of conscience are becoming fixed, special forms of sin—avarice, or pride, or lust—are striking their claws deeper into your soul, and holding their bleeding booty firmer. *A. M.*—Fearful it is to consider that sin does not only drive us into calamity, but it makes us also impatient, and embitters our spirit in the sufferance ; it cries aloud for vengeance, and so torments men before the time even with such fearful outcries and horrid alarms, that their hell begins before the fire is kindled. It hinders our prayers, and consequently makes us hopeless and helpless. It perpetually affrights the conscience, unless by its frequent stripes it brings a callousness and an insensible damnation upon it. It makes us to lose all that which Christ purchased for us—all the blessings of His providence, the comforts of His Spirit, the aids of His grace, the light of His countenance, the hopes of His glory. *Jeremy Taylor.*

Here the avenger *pursues* the soul, but until mercy's work is *finished* with the sinner's mortal life, his final grasp is withheld. While the soul lives, however great its suffering and anguish, however dark its forebodings and piercing its self-reproaches, yet it finds some allevi-

ation from these in absorbing pursuits and exciting pleasures. But in its future these pursuits and pleasures will be withdrawn, and all the pursuing evils will be left to work their unresisted will. There the sense of *want*, the conscious disquiet, the poignant self-reproach, the natural consequences of past evil deeds will be intensified. These will constitute the condemned soul's *entire* experience. Its strong ungratified desires will unquenchably crave. The fires of conscience will perpetually burn. Forever shut out from the presence of God, forever excluded from the realm of light and love, from participation in celestial knowledge, affection, and blessedness, the adjudged sinner fast-bound in the chains of evil, he who was made in the image of God and destined for an immortal fellowship with God shall be prisoned in the abode of fallen spirits, shut up forever to their fearful companionship! B.

How indefeasible the happiness of the saints! The God that cannot lie has engaged that *to the righteous good shall be repaid*; they shall be abundantly recompensed for all the good they have done, and all the ill they have suffered in this world. H.—For the true man “pleasure” is not by any means the best thing, nor “pain” the worst and most dreadful. “Duty,” and the satisfactions which wait on duty, are infinitely before either. The satisfaction which comes of doing right in scorn of consequence is infinitely sweeter and profounder than any mere pleasure; and the shame and degradation which spring from doing what we know to be wrong are infinitely more dreadful than pain, though they include pain. And, therefore, God the Giver rewards us when we suffer pain for Him, not with a corresponding pleasure, but with that inward peace and blessedness which are of so much greater and more enduring worth. Cox.

22. *A good man's estate lasts; he leaves an inheritance to his children's children.* It is part of his praise, that he is thoughtful for posterity; that he does not lay all out upon himself, but is in care to do well for those that come after him; not by withholding more than is meet, but by a prudent and decent frugality. He trains up his children to this, that they may leave it to their children; and especially he is careful, both by justice and charity, to obtain the blessing of God upon what he has, and to entail that upon his children, without which the greatest industry and frugality will be in vain. *A good man*, by being good and doing good, by honoring the Lord with his substance and spending it in His service, secures it to his

posterity; or if he should not leave them much of this world's goods, his prayers, his instructions, his good example, will be the best entail; and the promises of the covenant will be an inheritance to his *children's children* (Psalm 103: 17). H.

Wealth of sinner laid up for the righteous. An expression of trust, that in the long run the anomalies of the world are rendered even. The heaped-up treasures of the wicked find their way at last into the hands of better men. E. H. P.

23. Much food is in the tillage of the poor. It was “the tillage of the poor,” the careful, diligent husbandry of the man who had only a little patch of land to look after, that filled the storehouses of the Holy Land. Hence the proverb of our text arose. It preserves the picture of the economical conditions in which it originated, and it is capable of, and is intended to have, an application to all forms and fields of work. In all it is true that the bulk of the harvested results are due, not to the large labors of the few, but to the minute, unnoticed toils of the many. Small service is true service, and the aggregate of such produces large crops. Spade husbandry gets most out of the ground. The laborer's allotment of half an acre is generally more prolific than the average of the squire's estate. Much may be made of slender gifts, small resources, and limited opportunities if carefully cultivated, as they should be, and as their very slenderness should stimulate their being. The most largely endowed has no more obligation and no fairer field than the most slenderly gifted lies under and possesses. God, who has builded up some of the towering Alps out of mica flakes, builds up His Church out of infinitesimally small particles—slenderly endowed men touched by the consecration of His love. If we truly employ whatsoever gifts God has given to us, then we shall be accepted according to that we have, and not according to that we have not. . . . The wholesome old proverb, “many littles make a mickle,” is as true about the influence brought to bear in the world to arrest evil and to sweeten corruption as it is about anything besides. Christ has a great deal more need of the cultivation of the small patches that He gives to the most of us than He has even in the cultivation of the large estates that He bestows on a few. Responsibility is not to be measured by amount of gift, but is equally stringent, entire and absolute, whatsoever be the measure of the endowments from which it arises. A. M.

24. We are not obliged to understand *rod* here in the mere literal sense ; but it means at least *correction in some way for faults*. M. S. —The rod is the symbol of that authority which God has committed to fathers and mothers for training up their children in His nurture and admonition. The parent is not only to study child nature, but the special dis-

position of each child. He is to exercise his authority kindly yet firmly, wisely and prayerfully. Perhaps there was too much severity in the olden times. But there may be too much indulgence nowadays. If children are not taught to obey at home they will not grow up as law-abiding citizens of the republic and loyal subjects of the kingdom of God. *Babb.*

CHAPTER XIV.

1 EVERY wise woman buildeth her house :
But the foolish plucketh it down with her own hands.

2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD :
But he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride :
But the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

4 Where no oxen are, the crib is clean :
But much increase is by the strength of the ox.

5 A faithful witness will not lie :
But a false witness uttereth lies.

6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and *findeth it* not :
But knowledge is easy unto him that hath understanding.

7 Go into the presence of a foolish man,
And thou shalt not perceive *in him* the lips of knowledge.

8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way :
But the folly of fools is deceit.

9 The foolish make a mock at guilt :
But among the upright there is good will.

10 The heart knoweth its own bitterness ;
And a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy.

11 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown :
But the tent of the upright shall flourish.

12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
But the end thereof are the ways of death.

13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful ;
And the end of mirth is heaviness.

14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways :
And a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself.

15 The simple believeth every word :
But the prudent man looketh well to his going.

16 A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil :
But the fool beareth himself insolently, and is confident.

17 He that is soon angry will deal foolishly :
And a man of wicked devices is hated.

18 The simple inherit folly :
But the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

19 The evil bow before the good ;
And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour :
But the rich hath many friends.

21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth :
But he that hath pity on the poor, happy is he.

22 Do they not err that devise evil ?
But mercy and truth *shall be to* them that devise good.

23 In all labour there is profit :
But the talk of the lips *tendeth* only to penury.

24 The crown of the wise is their riches :
But the folly of fools is *only* folly.

25 A true witness delivereth souls :
But he that uttereth lies *causeth* deceit.

26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence :
And his children shall have a place of refuge.

27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
To depart from the snares of death.

28 In the multitude of people is the king's glory :
But in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.

29 He that is slow to anger is of great understanding :

But he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.
 30 A sound heart is the life of the flesh :
 But envy is the rottenness of the bones.
 31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his
 Maker :
 But he that hath mercy on the needy hon-
 oureth him.
 32 The wicked is thrust down in his evil-
 doing :
 But the righteous hath hope in his death.

33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that
 hath understanding :
 But *that which is* in the inward part of fools
 is made known.
 34 Righteousness exalteth a nation :
 But sin is a reproach to any people.
 35 The king's favour is toward a servant that
 dealeth wisely :
 But his wrath shall be *against* him that
 causeth shame.

1. THE "woman" (wife) is thought of as a manager of her domestic concerns. Managing them prudently, she increases the comforts of the household, lessens the outgoes, builds up the estate. The foolish woman, managing badly, reverses this process, and tears down her house. H. C.—Many a family is brought, to ruin by ill housewifery, as well as by ill husbandry. A *foolish* woman, that has no fear of God nor regard to her business, that is wilful and wasteful and humorsome, will as certainly be the ruin of her house as if she *plucked it down with her hands*; and the husband himself, with all his care, can scarcely prevent it. H.

4. In its literal meaning a household proverb, "Labor has its rough, unpleasant side, yet it ends in profit." But here, as elsewhere, there may be a meaning below the surface. The life of contemplation may seem purer, "cleaner" than that of action. The outer business of the world brings its cares and disturbances, but also "much increase." There will be a sure reward of that activity in good works for him who goes, as with "the strength of the ox," to the task to which God calls him. E. H. P.

5. The allegiance of the soul to truth is tested by small things rather than by those which are more important. There is many a man who would lose his life rather than perjure himself in a court of justice, whose life is yet a tissue of small insincerities. We think that we hate falsehood when we are only hating the consequences of falsehood. We resent hypocrisy and treachery and calumny, not because they are untrue, but because they harm us. We hate the false calumny, but we are half pleased with the false praise. It is evidently not the element of untruth here that is displeasing, but the element of harmfulness. Now, he is a man of integrity who hates untruth *as* untruth; who resents the smooth and polished falsehood of society, which does no harm; who turns in indignation from the glittering, whitened lie of sepulchral Pharisaism, which injures no one. F. W. R.

6. The successful pursuit of wisdom presupposes at least earnestness and reverence. The scoffer shuts himself out from the capacity of recognizing truth. E. H. P.—Bacon says: "He that comes to seek after knowledge with a mind disposed to scorn and censure will be sure to find matter enough for his humor, but none for his instruction." Remarkably the scorner is here put over against the man of understanding, as if to imply that the former naturally lacks that love of truth and that sympathetic attraction toward it which intuitively sees and then seizes upon it. To a man who has these last-named qualities knowledge comes naturally and easily. This doctrine assumes that good moral qualities are vital to the acquisition of truly valuable knowledge. H. C.

Having sneered at all that is pure, august and heavenly, men may, amid the ruins of their faith, be haunted by spectres of multiform doubt; having challenged God to forsake them, they may spend their decline in ever learning, yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth; for "a scorner seeketh wisdom and findeth it not." J. W. A.—Have it as a fixed principle, that getting into any scornful way is fatal. Scorn is dark, and has no eyes; for the eyes it thinks it has are only sockets in the place of eyes. Doubt is reason, scorn is disease. One simply questions, searching after evidence; the other has got above evidence, and turns to mockery the modest way that seeks it. Even if truth were found, it could not stay in any scorning man's bosom. The tearing voice, the scowling brow, the leer, the sneer, the jeer, would make the place a robber's cave to it, and drive the delicate and tender guest to make his escape at the first opportunity. There was never a scorner that gave good welcome to truth. No man can fitly seek after truth who does not hold truth in the deepest reverence. Truth must be sacred even as God, else it is nothing. *Bushnell.*

8. Christian prudence consists in a right *understanding of our way*; for we are travellers,

whose concern it is not to spy wonders but to get forward toward their journey's end. It is to *understand our own way*, not to be critics and busybodies in other men's matters, but to look well to ourselves and *ponder the path of our feet*; to understand the directions of our way, that we may observe them; the dangers of our way, that we may avoid them; the difficulties of our way, that we may break through them; and the advantages of our way, that we may improve them; to understand the rules we are to walk by and the ends we are to walk toward, and walk accordingly. H.

9. Fools scoff at and scornfully repel the idea of personal guilt; nor do they care much if the fact of wrong-doing is fastened upon them. The antithesis lies (as often) between what is assumed in the first clause and asserted in the second, thus: Fools mock at sin and therefore incur God's wrath [not His favor]; but the righteous have His favor, and what is thus true of God's favor is true also of the esteem of all right-thinking moral agents in the universe. H. C.

Society is always suffering from perverse banter and coarse humor directed against rigid morals. The thefts, defalcations, peculations, forgeries, fraudulent escapes from obligation, full living on other men's money, and filthy purchase of votes and verdicts, which are at once the opprobrium and the rottenness of certain classes in modern society, are fostered and brought into development by what young men hear in the houses where their business lies; by jokes which imply that a clever operation is worth some moral risk; by pleasantries about lying and stealing, under decent names; and by contemptuous pity of the tortoise-like habits of a former age. J. W. A.—Religion and virtue, in all their forms, either of doctrine or of precept—of piety toward God, integrity toward men, or regularity in private life—are so far from affording any ground of ridicule that they are entitled to our highest veneration. It is said in Scripture, "fools make a mock at sin." They had better make a mock at pestilence, at war, or famine. With one who would choose these public calamities for the subject of his sport you would not be inclined to associate: you would fly from him as worse than a fool, as a man of distempered mind. Yet certain it is that, to the great society of mankind, sin is a greater calamity than pestilence, or famine, or war. Blair.

If the law could suddenly lighten on the minds of the "fools" that are making "*a mock at sin*"—what fearful amazement! The object

of their gaiety would instantly assume a terrifying aspect. The loose, vague, indulgent notions of the evil of sin, which men thoughtlessly entertain in their own favor—the slight estimates, the easy palliations—how would these be exploded and annihilated by a luminous manifestation of that law! Conscience would rise up, incensed to have been so trifled with and beguiled. J. F.—What is the reason that so many make a mock of sin and play with the unquenchable fire, but ignorance? Did they know what they do when they wilfully break God's law, they would sooner leap into a furnace of scalding lead than provoke so jealous a God. But sin goeth in a disguise, and thence is welcome; like Judas, it kisseth and kills; like Joab, it salutes and slays. The foolish sinner seeth the pleasant streams of Jordan, but not the Dead Sea into which they will certainly empty themselves to his ruin. Swinnoek.—The wages that sin bargains with the sinner are life, pleasure, and profit; but the wages it pays him with are death, torment, and destruction; he that would understand the falsehood and deceit of sin thoroughly must compare its promises and its payments together. South.

Men make a mock at sin by their words and by their actions. We show our scorn of a thing in our words when we speak carelessly of it or turn it into ridicule. We show it in our actions when we live in such a manner as proves that we have no value or regard for it. Even of the mockery of words, few are wholly innocent; of the mockery of deeds, all have been more or less guilty. The guilt of such mockery is too plain; the folly is the folly of playing with death. It is the folly of provoking God to cut us off in the midst of our calculating wickedness. Above all is such conduct folly, because we are disabling our hearts and souls more and more for the work of repentance, without which we know we can have no part in the promises of the Gospel. For nothing is more certain than that the longer a man persists in sin the harder it is to leave it off. His heart is deadened; his conscience is blunted; his soul closes itself by little and little against the impulses of the Holy Spirit. A. W. Hare.

Fools make a mock at sin—more cruel fools make a mock at holiness! A little laughter, a passing jest, an idle nickname, or sometimes, it may be, an unkind word, these are strong enough to shake many purposes which seemed to be firm, and to overthrow resolutions which, but for such assaults, would probably have stood fast. In such ways does thoughtlessness every day and hour deny Christ; denies Him

itself, and makes others deny Him. G. M.—
If we would truly see what sin is, we must see it in the light of redemption. Who can measure the guilt and the power of that sin from which we could only be redeemed by the sacrifice of the Son of God? See your folly in the light of your Redeemer's tears, your Redeemer's anguish, your Redeemer's cross; and confess as you look on His marvellous sacrifice that "fools" only can "make a mock at sin."
Bishop Perowne.

10. Within the range of human experience there is perhaps no expression of the ultimate solitude of each man's soul at all times so striking in its truth and depth as this. Something there is in every sorrow, and in every joy, which no one else can share. E. H. P.—
Every man we meet carries in the unperceived solitude of his bosom a little world of his own; and we are just as blind and as insensible, both of perception and of sympathy, about his engrossing objects as he is about ours. Did we suffer this thought to have all its weight upon us, it might serve to make us more candid and more considerate of others; to abate the monopolizing selfishness of our nature; to soften the malignity which comes out of those envious contemplations that we are so apt to cast on the fancied ease and prosperity which are around us. It might serve to reconcile every man to his own lot, and dispose him to bear with thankfulness his own burden. And we should surely conclude that throughout all conceivable varieties of human condition there are trials which can neither be adequately told, on the one side, nor fully understood on the other; that the ways of God to man are as equal in this as in every department of His administration; and that, go to whatever quarter of human experience we may, we shall find how He has provided enough to exercise the patience and to accomplish the purposes of a wise and a salutary discipline upon all His children.
T. C.

For the most part we are strangers to the inner life of others, to their thoughts and feelings, their joys and sorrows, and they are alike strangers to ours. "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness." The world within ourselves is for the most part known only to God and to our own hearts. It is but little comparatively that others know of our inner lives, our trials, our secret sins; and our efforts to overcome them are known only to the all-searching eye.
Hallock.—Human suffering, in all its forms, is solitary. Tenderest sympathies may flock abundantly and graciously to visit it and minister

to it. But there is something in it that their kindest offices cannot reach; something appointed by Providence to be left alone; and it is well. Grief is of many kinds, but all grief that is really terrible sends the soul into speechless, secret solitude. Human love may reach out ready hands, eager to help and to soothe; but it cannot reach down to that lowest centre of anguish where the pang throbs in intensest pain. So true is it that the heart knoweth its own bitterness, that not only the stranger, but the friend, cannot intermeddle with its distress. F. D. H.

You by whom silent suffering, secret grief, and hidden joy are understood; by the knowledge of your own unspoken sorrow, unexpressed because inexpressible feelings; by the consciousness of the unrevealed depths of your own nature, the earnest but ever unsatisfied yearnings of your spirit, learn to reverence and love those by whom you are surrounded, whose inner life can never be completely read, but whom you are sure must need sacred sympathy and tender consideration. The silent breathings of the spirit are not for our ears; the hot tears which in secret fall are not for our eyes; in mercy has the veil been drawn round each heart; but by the sacred memory of our own sadness, let our voice be gentle, our look tender, our tread quiet, as we pass among the mourners.
Jessie Coombs.

These words mean that the inner life of man—his truest and highest life—is a solitary and secret thing. It may be said of every human soul that "clouds and darkness are round about it," and that it dwells in light or in gloom that no man can approach unto. This loneliness is not our own choice; it is imposed upon us by a law of our nature that we cannot violate or reverse. When we *try* to reveal our innermost soul we fail; after we have said everything, much remains unsaid. When our sympathy for the sufferings of our friends is deepest, we sit with them and are dumb; we cannot say what we feel; our tears and our silence seem to tell them more than our speech. And as we are *unable* to utter all that is in us when we try to utter it, so we are *unwilling*, for the most part, that any but God should search us and try us, should know either all the good or all the evil that is in us. Every man bears his own burden, fights his own battle, walks in the path which no other feet have trodden. God alone knows us through and through. And He loves us, as Keble says, better than He knows. He has isolated us from all besides, that He alone may have our perfect confidence, and that we

may acquire the habit of looking to Him alone for perfect sympathy. He will come into the stillness and solitude in which the soul dwells, and make the darkness bright with His presence, and break the monotonous silence with words of love. We have Him only to speak to ; He alone can understand us. He will rejoice with us when we rejoice, and weep with us when we weep. The heart knoweth its own bitterness ; God knows it, too ; and though a stranger cannot intermeddle with its joy, He whose temple and dwelling-place is the soul that loves Him is no stranger, but the soul's most intimate and only friend. *R. W. Dale.*

11. Two beautiful points are prominent in this proverb. There is an antithesis between "house" and "tent ;" the *house* of the wicked, built as he supposes of most substantial material, wood, brick, or stone, shall yet be razed to the ground ; while the *tent* of the upright, fragile in itself, put up so as to be easily taken down, shall yet stand, and long outlast the house of the wicked. This tent is said to "flourish," like a plant, shrub, or tree, well rooted, having a life-power of its own, and therefore blooming in beauty as well as living with its own life and only waxing the stronger for the coming and going of the seasons and for all the storms that beat upon it. All this is involved in the Hebrew verb here rendered "flourish."

12. The obvious sense of this proverb is no doubt the true one—viz., that a way of living (in the moral sense of life) may seem right to a man, and yet be wrong and end in death. Men may be deceived by their associates, or they may deceive themselves, and so may assume what is utterly wrong to be, at least in their case, right. Hence the somewhat popular doctrine that it matters not what a man believes provided he be sincere, is a fatal mistake, for a man may think himself very sincere in accepting and holding pernicious error and in pursuing a fatally wrong course of life. This proverb, affirming a most momentous truth, appears again (16 : 25), also one part of it (12 : 15). *H. C.*

Their way is seemingly fair ; it *seems right* to themselves ; they please themselves with a fancy that they are as they should be, that their opinions and practices are good, such as will bear them out. The way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly-mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, seem right to those that walk in them ; much more, in religion external performances, partial reformations, and blind zeal will bring them to heaven ; they flatter themselves in their own eyes, that all will be well at last. Their

end is really fearful, and the more so for their mistake ; it is *the ways of death*, eternal death ; their iniquity will certainly be their ruin. Self-deceivers will prove, in the end, self-destroyers. *H.*—The great truth is that no one, old or young, can save his soul by following the course of life quietly and letting it drift him whither it will. It is not in our life here as we now live, with all its wisdom and all its labor and all its pleasures, to attain to life eternal. Round the tree of life there is a fiery guard, which allows not fallen man in his own natural course to reach unto it. It is not like a tree standing by the wayside, so that we have only to put forth our hand as we go by and eat and live forever. Christ came to take us out of our common nature, to tear us away from the path which we were naturally treading ; to give us another nature not our own, to set us in a new way, of which the end is not death but life. *T. A.*

There is a theory very much in fashion, that if a man acts according to his convictions he cannot be brought into condemnation. The principle here involved is simply this, that a man's own ideas are his own standard, that he is a law unto himself, that if he does violence to his own views of truth and error, good and evil, he is reprehensible, but that if he be fully convinced in his own mind that is at once a bar to his condemnation. The text offers a strong protest against this theory, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man ;" but, notwithstanding his sincerity, notwithstanding his convictions, the end thereof are the ways of death. *Bishop Woodford.*—Many a way that leads to perdition may seem to us to be right. Nothing is better calculated to disturb the superficial optimism in which so many of our fellow-men find a delusive security than the firm conviction of this fact. In their opinion, that a man may be saved he must be sincere ; in other words, the way he follows must seem to him to be right. In the order of things temporal it is evident that sincerity in ignorance or error has never saved any one from the often terrible consequences which such ignorance or error may entail. Societies are based upon this maxim : "No one is supposed to be ignorant of the law." Moreover, this axiom is graven in nature itself. Nature strikes those who violate its laws, and never takes into consideration their state of ignorance or good faith. *Bersier.*

There is nothing in life for which we are so deeply and solemnly accountable as the *formation of our belief*. It is the compass which

guides our way, which if it vary ever so little from truth is sure to cause a fatal divergence in the end. Whether we consider practice or belief, each man's deeming is not each man's law ; every man's deeming may be wrong, and we can only find that which is right by each one of us believing and serving God as He has revealed Himself to us in Christ. *Alford.*—God does not permit us to content ourselves in anything short of the truth. He marks out a plain path for us to follow ; and gives us no reason to conclude that anything but truth will save us. The sentiment of its being a matter of indifference what we believe or practise, if we are only sincere in it, is a maxim of the world, not of God. *Sincerity does not alter the truth.* If God has given a revelation of His will to man which contains a definite meaning, that meaning is unalterable. No belief of any man to the contrary can in the least affect it. If God has said, for instance, that no man shall be saved except he repent, if any man think otherwise, be he ever so sincere in his opinion, the truth remains, and the consequences must take place. *Sincerity in error often arises from wilful blindness, and therefore is guilty and must be punished.* How often does it happen that a man will refuse to look, determined to believe what he wishes to believe, be it right or wrong. Our Lord Jesus Christ long ago declared that there are some who "hate the light, and will not come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd." *Sincerity in error often arises from indifference to the will of God ; and therefore is guilty and must be punished.* God has given us a revelation of His will, and surrounded it with such unequivocal evidences that no honest man who will examine can mistake them. Yet many are so indifferent about this revelation that they will not even give themselves the trouble to inquire what it contains. God has declared that you must seek the truth and embrace it, and you are sincere in being indifferent to it ! Your sincerity, then, amounts to this, you are sincere in acting contrary to the command of God. Such sincerity is the very aggravation of your sin. What idea can a man have of God who can suppose that He will regard with complacency the sincerity which proceeds from mere indifference to what He has said ? Can you suppose that God has given us a revelation of His will, and yet cares nothing at all about it ? No, God is not sporting with His creatures. He has not given a law to be trifled with. He has surrounded it by the most solemn and awful sanctions, and He expects, being a God of truth, that men will place confidence in what

He says, or else take the reward of their perverseness in destruction. *Old Review.*

13. The reaction which follows vain mirth is often the most painful heaviness. The passion for laughter, which assumes it to be very much the chief good of life, is a miserable folly.

14. The apostate from God shall be sated with his own ways, shall have enough and more than enough of the bitter fruits of his apostasy. On the contrary, the good man will find ample sources of joy in himself. The turn of the thought which is the gist of the proverb lies in the play upon the sense of the word rendered "filled," which is obviously to be supplied in the last clause. The backslider shall be filled with the sorrow that comes from his backsliding ; the good man shall be filled with the joy of his steadfast goodness. *H. C.*

In the heart, unseen, there has been a long preparation of backsliding. Vain thoughts have lodged within and vile thoughts have been welcome visitors. By such a process his heart has been hollowed out, and inhabited by creatures more loathsome than crawling vermin, while the skin of profession was kept whole, and its fairest side turned to public view. Beware of backsliding in heart ; small beginnings may issue in a fearful end. *Arnot.*

The Christian has a *fons perennis* within him. He is *satisfied from himself*. The men of the world borrow all their joy from without. Joy wholly from without is precarious and short. From without it may be gathered, but like gathered flowers, though fair and sweet for a season, it must soon wither and become offensive. Joy from within is like smelling the rose on the tree, it is more sweet and fair, and it is immortal. *Salter.*—The good man acts from principle and in the sight of God. He is not only preserved from the sting and reproach of an evil conscience, but he possesses that joyous healthiness of soul which arises from a life of purity, devotion, and goodness ; that calm yet irrepresible feeling of delight, which daily and hourly, continually and always, fills the heart. It is not positive reflection upon doing, it is not thinking about character or actions, but the perpetual rising up in the soul of an inexpressible satisfaction. This is the way in which a good man is "satisfied from himself." *Binney.*

The essence of happiness and misery is in character ; a man sinful in heart shall be filled with his own ways, and the good man also shall be satisfied from himself. *G. B. C.*—We all have our creeds, and, in spite of ourselves, we profess them—the creed of fashion ; the creed

of appetite ; the creed of a selfish expediency ; the creed of a sect ; the creed of indifference, which is as irreligious and as bigoted in its way as any other ; or the creed of eternal right and Gospel faith. Conduct is the great profession. Behavior is the perpetual revealing of us. A man's doctrines flow from his fingers' ends, and stand out in his doings. What he may say is not his chief profession, but how he acts. Character lets out the secret of his belief ; what he *does* tells what he *is*. He has "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," when he has "Christ formed within him." His profession is as natural as the pulse in his veins. The good man makes profession of his goodness by simply being good. F. D. H.

15. The "simple" in the sense of Solomon are the credulous and susceptible who are open to every impression, especially if evil, and who have no forethoughtful wariness in choosing their path of life. The point of the proverb is that while the prudent man thinks before he acts, the simple believes whatever is said to him and thinks not. H. C.

16. A wise man fears sin and distrusts himself. He knows that the enemy is strong, and that his own defences are feeble. His policy, therefore, is not to brave danger, but to keep out of harm's way. *Arnot*.—The wise man fears to sin ; has a reverential fear of God, and hence departs from evil. The fool is self-confident, reckless, breaking over all restraint. H. C.—None so bold as the blind. "The fool is confident." If he be in an error or entangled in any evil cause or way, you know not what to say to him for his recovery. The less he knows the more he despiseth knowledge and sets his face against his teachers. Will you go to dispute or debate the case with one of these ? Be sure of it they will put you down and have the day. He will go away and boast that you could not convince him ; as if a madman should boast that the physicians could not all of them cure him. He that speaks nonsense saith nothing while he seems to speak. And there is no refuting a man that saith nothing. Nonsense is unanswerable, if there be but enough of it. *Barter*.—Presumption is folly. He who when he is warned of his danger cannot bear to be checked, bids defiance to the wrath and curse of God, and fearless of danger persists in his rebellion, makes bold with the occasions of sin and plays upon the precipice, he is a fool, for he acts against his reason and his interest, and his ruin will quickly be the proof of his folly.

20. *The rich have many friends*, friends to their riches, in hope to get something out of

them. There is little friendship in the world but what is governed by self-interest, which is no true friendship at all, nor what a wise man will either value himself on or put any confidence in. H.

21. This "pity" of the text is a very wide word. It covers both the kindly feeling and the kindly act ; and it stretches itself over both the great departments of human necessity—men's sufferings and men's sins. The same attitude of mind which makes one relenting or forgiving to the penitent offender makes one also pity and relieve the suppliant sufferer. He who sins becomes a candidate for mercy so soon as he acknowledges his sin. *Dykes*.

22. The original word for "devised" includes both plotting and laboring for an end. He who in this sense deviseth mischief will "err," or miss his end, to his ruin ; while mercy and truth will be the reward of those who devise good. The intent of the heart determines the moral character of the act, and therefore the sort of retribution that righteously follows.

23. All well-directed labor naturally brings some useful returns, but lip-words are only toward want. Mere talk, words having no worthy aim, work out only poverty. H. C.—

In all labor there is profit. If you want knowledge you must toil for it ; if food, you must toil for it ; and if pleasure, you must toil for it. Toil is the law. Pleasure comes through toil, and not by self-indulgence and indolence. When one gets to love his work, his life is a happy one. *Ruskin*.

The lesson holds good through all matters of life. It is a short-sighted mistake to avoid taking trouble ; for God has so ordered the world that industry will always repay itself. God has set thee thy work, then fulfil it. Fill it full. Throw thy whole heart and soul into it. Do it carefully, accurately, completely. It will be better for thee and for thy children after thee. All neglect, carelessness, slurring over work, is a sin—a sin against God, who has called us to our work ; a sin against our country and our neighbors, who ought to profit by our work ; and a sin against ourselves also, for we ought to be made wiser and better men by our work. *C. Kingsley*.—It is only by labor that thoughts can be made healthy, and only by thoughts that labor can be made happy ; and the two cannot be separated with impunity. It is no man's business whether he has genius or not ; work he must, whatever he is, but quietly and steadily ; and the natural and unforced results of such work will be always the thing

God meant him to do, and will be his best. No agonies nor heartrendings will enable him to do any better. If he is a great man, they will be great things; but always, if peacefully done, good and right; always, if restlessly and ambitiously done, false, hollow, and despicable. *Ruskin.*

Toil is every man's Divine vocation. All of us, unless we have fallen from grace, belong to the laboring classes, however differing our occupations may be. It is not a question whether a man labors with the hand or the head, whether he drives a plough or handles a pen; but whether what he does supplies a real demand, whether his labor is helpful and enriching to his generation. Every such man is worthy of honor, and only such men are. *Behrends.*—Luxury and leisure are more fatal to human life than downright hard work, whether of muscle or of brain. Steady labor of the body hardens the muscles, invigorates the nerves, and gives the deep rhythmic movement of health to the breathing. Steady labor of the mind purifies, invigorates, and feeds both mind and brain. Lack of bodily labor results in bodily atrophy and wasting; lack of toil of the brain means the gradual death of the mind. Overwork sometimes kills; complete cessation of activity always kills. See to it that it is not inactivity that is weakening you, rather than overwork; see to it that your faculties are not dying because they have too little, rather than too much, to do. *H. C. T.*

There is nothing like life's drudgery to make men and women of us. You chafe under it. You sigh for leisure, to be freed from bondage to hours, to duties, to tasks, to appointments, to rules, to the treadmill round. Yet this is God's school for you. Accept your treadmill round, your plodding, your dull task-work, and do always your best—and you will grow into strong, noble character. *J. R. M.*—Character comes out of work. It is what we do that educates us, rather than what we read or speculate about. The work of life, with the temper and spirit we put into it, trains and moulds. It not only illustrates but cultivates virtue. High, honorable integrity of act cultivates integrity of heart; enthusiasm in effort resupplies the founts of enthusiasm in the will, and sympathetic activities nourish the emotion itself out of which they flow. Daily work assists us to larger and clearer views of Divine truth. We may not see how the minor and distracting duties of daily life—those of the home, the school, the shop—can be made tributary to advancement in piety. There is, however, a proverb older than Christ,

that says, "In all labor there is profit." While the Word of God puts discredit on labor that is dishonorable or useless, it extols the labor of the wise. Fidelity in work and a fervent, enthusiastic temper will assuredly freshen our faculties and give tone and balance to the mind. *R. S. S.*

The true rest of the soul is that not of inactivity, but of congenial exertion. Labor is rest to the active and energetic spirit. The mind itself does not waste or grow weary; and but for the weight of the weapons wherewith it works, it might think, and imagine, and love on forever. The service of God, beyond all other kinds of labor, may become the most perfect rest to the soul. As love to Christ deepens in the soul that is truly given to Him, the work which it prompts us to do for Him loses the feeling of effort and passes into pleasure. This rest is not absolute, but relative. While it is a great thing to be an earnest worker in Christ's service, yet the Christian life is not mainly a life of action, but of trust. *Caird.*

The talk of the lips tendeth only to penury. Here is noted that words and discourse abound most where there is idleness and want. *Bacon*—Talking without working will make men poor. Those that waste their time in tittle-tattle, in telling and hearing new things, and neglect the work of their place and day, waste what they have, and the course they take *tends to penury*, and will end in it. If men's religion runs all out in talk and noise and their praying is only the labor of the lips, they will be spiritually poor and come to nothing. *H.*

24. The riches they acquire add new honors to the wise, inasmuch as they still deport themselves wisely and worthily; but the folly of fools will still be folly though they acquire never so much wealth. Wealth will make them no wiser, and hence will confer upon them no honor. They will only play the fool the more conspicuously. *H. C.*

26. *Fear is confidence.* The words sound strangely. They are like that blessed paradox of Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong." They are strange, indeed, but true. To fear God aright is to be delivered from all fear. "His salvation is nigh them that fear Him." *Arnot.*

Love, which destroys fear, heightens reverence and deepens self-distrust. The Bible tells us both that "perfect love casteth out fear," and that "in the fear of the Lord is strong confidence." The fear which is cast out is in reality an altogether different thing from that which is enjoined as the foundation of all re-

ligion, and as being the abiding duty and joy of Christian men. The one is simply the dread of personal consequences falling upon me. The other is that reverential and awe stricken bowing down of myself before the face of the Infinite Majesty, which must ever be an element in the approach of created beings to Him. But it is worth noticing how love, which casts out dread and makes us cease to be afraid of God, perfects reverence and makes us venerate with holy awe far deeper than ever subsisted by the side of terror, and yet makes us stand much nearer to God than when we were slaves, and crouched before the image of Him which conscience set up. Love takes out of the heart all that bitter sense of possible evil coming on me and leaves me at liberty, with thankful, humble heart, and clear eye, to look into the centre of the brightness and see there the light of His infinite mercy. Love destroys fear, and perfects reverence and self-distrust. A. M.

26, 27. The *fear of the Lord* is here put for all gracious principles, producing gracious practices. Where this reigns, it produces a holy security and serenity of mind; there is in it a *strong confidence*, it enables a man still to hold fast both his purity and his peace, whatever happens, and gives him boldness before God and the world. It entails a blessing upon posterity. The children of them that by faith make God their confidence shall be encouraged by the promise that God will be a God to believers and to their seed, to fly to Him as their refuge, and they shall find shelter in Him. It is an overflowing, everflowing spring of comfort and joy; it is a *fountain of life*, yielding constant pleasure and satisfaction to the soul. It is a sovereign antidote against sin and temptation. H.

29. The two personages described here are doubly contrasted. The one is slow to anger; the other quick and hasty; the former has great wisdom and evinces it prominently by his remarkable self-control; the latter not only has great folly, but *sets it up on high* before all observers. Every one sees and feels how foolish it is to let one's passions flash suddenly into flame with no self-control. H. C.—While so many think it the only valor to command and master others, study thou the dominion of thyself, and quiet thine own commotions. Let right reason be thy lawgiver; move by the intelligences of the superior faculties, not by the rapt of passion, nor merely by that of temper and constitution. They who are merely carried on by the wheel of such inclinations, without the hand and guidance of sovereign reason, are

but the automatus part of mankind, rather lived than living, or at least underliving themselves. *Browne*.

30. A calm, placid heart [better than "sound"] gives life to the flesh in the sense of augmenting the vital forces and conducing to health and therefore to life; while, on the other hand, envy, forever disquieting the soul, works rottenness of the bones. Probably the Hebrews were familiar with the physiological fact that an unhappy state of mind retards the healing of broken bones. H. C.—Envy is the worst of all passions, and feedeth upon the spirits, and they again upon the body, and so much the more because it is perpetual, and, as it is said, keepeth no holidays. *Bacon*.—Envy, like a cold poison, benumbs and stupefies; and thus, as if conscious of its own impotence, it folds its arms in despair. When it conquers, it is commonly in the dark, by treachery and undermining, by calumny and detraction. Envy is no less foolish than detestable; it is a vice which they say keeps no holiday, but is always in the wheel, and working upon its own disquiet. *Collier*.

To have constituted the world so that envy is as rottenness in the bones, and love is felt like the glow of health permeating the frame, is a glory to the world's Maker. Every sensation of glad enlargement enjoyed by a loving heart, at the sight of a neighbor's prosperity, is a still small voice, announcing to him who hath an ear that God is good; and every pang that gnaws the envious, like rottenness in his bones, is the same word, *God is good*, echoed unwillingly back from the suffering of sin. *Arnot*.

31. All the poor are under God's protection against unrighteous oppression, so that whoever tramples on God's law forbidding the oppression of the poor contemns God Himself. Both clauses concur to show how our treatment of God's poor expresses our regard for Himself. Oppressing them, we reproach Him; compassionating them, we do Him honor. Corresponding to which are the words of Jesus: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me." H. C.—It is a base thing to get goods to keep them. God, who only is infinitely rich, holdeth nothing in His own hands, but gives all to His creatures. If we will needs lay up, where should we rather repose it than in Christ's treasury? The poor man's hand is the treasury of Christ. All my superfluity shall be there hoarded up where I know it shall be safely kept, and surely returned me. *Bishop H.*

Mercy to the poor must be a law operating

from within, and not a system adopted from without. There must be regulating wisdom as well as motive power. Whatever share you may be able to take in the wholesale benevolence of organized societies, you should also carry on a retail business by personal contact with the sufferers. *Arnot.*—The objects on which mercy is exercised are as numerous as the wants and calamities incident to human nature. The merciful man labors, as far as his means allow, to instruct the ignorant; to reclaim the wanderer; to shelter the persecuted; to console the mourner; to forget injuries; to relieve the indigent; to comfort the sick. If this world's goods are wanting to him, he offers the tribute of Christian sympathy, and beseeches God for their support. *Pitman.*

32. The wicked is thrust down in his evil-doing. There are dark and real penalties to come in another life which the sacred writers dimly show to us. It is no part of my business to enlarge upon these solemn warnings. An inspired man may do it. But let me remind you that terror is a legitimate weapon to which to appeal, and, unwelcome and unfashionable as its use is nowadays, it is one of the weapons in the armory of the true preacher of God's Word. I believe we Christian ministers would do more if we were less chary of speaking out "the terror of the Lord." Such appeals are legitimate, and such terror is a part of the Divine Revelation. The clearer, the tenderer, the more stringent the beseechings of the love and the warnings of Christ's voice, the more solemn the consequences if we stop our ears to it. Better to hear it now, when it warns, and pleads, and beseeches, and comforts, and hallows, and quickens, than to hear it first when it rends the tombs and shakes the earth, and summons all to judgment, and condemns some to the outer darkness to which they had first condemned themselves. *A. M.*

The righteous hath hope in his death. These words have no meaning except on the supposition of a future state; for hope always looks forward and has respect unto something that is future; but if death puts an end to our being, what hope can the righteous have in his death any more than the wicked; or how can either of them have any hope at all? This hope can be built on nothing but the belief of the soul's immortality, and a future state of retribution. *Ibbot.*—This proverb draws the fearful contrast between the wicked and the righteous in their death, and leaves us to infer the yet more fearful contrast in their respective destinies in the life beyond. The wicked are

pressed and forced along by resistless agencies of disease or disaster, their guilty souls shrinking, recoiling, and struggling in vain against the iron power of death and retribution. They are thrust down *in their wickedness*, no penitence in their hearts and no pardon from the throne of a just God, and as the antithesis of the proverb implies, *with no hope*, such as the righteous have in their death. *H. C.*—The little particle *but* is of amazing force in the connection of the two affirmations. The wicked dieth in his wickedness and therefore without hope; but the righteous hath hope in his death. The whole proverb is a counterpart of that passage in the New Testament, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." *Cheever.*

The Scriptures have cast sufficient light on the reality of a future state, and on the certainty of final, unending joy for the righteous. Yet darkness rests upon the *manner* of our exit from this world, on the nature of the human soul when separate from the body, and on the entire mode of our future existence. But here the supporting arm of the Almighty comes to our relief. In Him the Christian may trust with the most confiding assurance. Were it not, however, for this solid resting-place, the valley of the shadow of death would have no egress. He who is without God in the world cannot appeal to His sustaining power. As he was without God in life, so he must be without Him in death. This poor, dependent, weak man, when heart and flesh are failing him, in this direst exigency of his existence, has nothing out of himself to which he can flee—no mighty Deliverer on whom he can hang. If this be not the consummation of wretchedness, what can be? *B. B. E.*—*The righteous hath hope in his death*, because his hope standeth in God's own covenant grace and love, which make sinners righteous in Christ. This hope shall never forsake the righteous; it animates him in life to love and obedience; it comforts him in death against fears of wrath and terrors of hell; it inspires him with joyful assurance of a crown of righteousness in life and immortality, according to the precious promises of God, through the righteousness of Jesus. *W. Mason.*

Death does not affect the moral character; it expends its force upon the body, but works no radical or real change in the soul. It has no power whatever to revolutionize the moral nature—to make it better or worse. In *itself* it can neither make a good man better nor a bad man worse. It can transfer, but cannot transform. Each person now living carries in himself at this

an every moment the essential elements of either heaven or hell. By the essential elements we mean those moral qualities, those dispositions and affections of soul which fit it for the one or for the other. Were all at this moment snatched from time into eternity, such are their moral characters that they would instantly drop into their appointed and appropriate places. What a thin partition separates the saint on earth from the saint in heaven—the sinner in time from the sinner in eternity. *Anon.*—If life has not made you, by God's grace through faith, holy—think you, will death without faith do it? The cold waters of that narrow stream are no purifying bath in which you may wash and be clean. No, no! as you go down into them, you will come up from them. If here you have not the Holy Spirit, which makes holy your hearts, the inheritance will never be yours—never. Here, or nowhere, you must begin. And they only have that Holy Spirit who receive it through Christ, and they only are heirs of God who are content to hold their possession through Him who is the true Lord of it, and who made us joint-heirs with Himself. *A. M.*

In one sentence at the close of the resurrection chapter, Paul brings together the three terms most terrible to man, never elsewhere united as they are here—death, sin, and the law. Death has no terror that sin does not give it; and if sin be destroyed death is resolved into a stingless accident in man's history, a mere change from what is good to something far better. Sin has an eternal terror of its own, dependent neither on death nor on the law; yet it is the law which defines and gives strength to sin; and unless the law be satisfied sin must rule forever. But in the work of the atoning Saviour these words lose their triple terror; the law is satisfied and sin is abolished, and death is translated into endless life. Then, cries the apostle, in the name of the ransomed Church, and finding a new song for this new transport: "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" And this word is the earnest, always on the lips of the redeemed upon earth, of that greater thanksgiving when redemption shall be complete. *W. B. Pope.*—This life is the vestibule, and death the gateway of another. Death is an apparent end, a real beginning. A Christian's death is the true entrance upon life. He goes right on living and serving, only in a higher sphere, where fatigue and decay are unknown. He reaps the fruit and reward of service begun on earth. His powers reach a higher maturity and find a nobler field for exertion. The sun that sets on this horizon rises

on another and a far broader one. *Dum exspiro spero. J. M. Sherwood. (Last printed words.)*

Death cannot separate from the love of God. Death does not change the spirit, it only liberates it. We have the assurance in the words of Christ, in the resurrection of Christ, that death does not destroy the soul. Rather, it sets the soul free from the lassitude and inactiveness of the body. The body hampers and manacles the soul. Now, can you conceive that death, which so adds to the spirit, can separate from the love of God? Death does not affect our love for our departed friends, save to augment it. How much more will it but augment the love of God! No, says the apostle, and our conscious and sentient being responds, Death cannot separate from the love of God. *R. S. S.*—Death will mean to us birth, deliverance, a new creation of ourselves. It will be what health is to the sick man, what home is to the exile, what the loved one given back is to the bereaved. As we draw near to it, a solemn gladness should fill our hearts. It is God's great morning lighting up the sky. The night with its terrors, its darkness, its feverish dreams, is passing away; and when we awake, it will be into the sunlight of God. *Merriam.*—Then make thoughts of death the exercise of thy life. Believe, as Jesus believed, that thy Father in heaven has appointed the hour of thy death, and that thy thoughts of death do not move the hour a single minute either backward or forward. Look at death in the death of Jesus, and it is then a friendly angel. Let the death of Jesus drive away death, and bring life before the soul. Think of death thus, for death in the death of Jesus is happy life. *Caspars.*

34. This proverb speaks of righteousness and sin as pertaining either to the government or to the general character of a people; or more probably to both, since in general the government will reflect the average sentiment and character of the people. The point of the antithesis seems to be not so much strength on the one hand and weakness on the other, as honor in the one case and shame in the other. Righteousness in the sense of rectitude, a just administration of government and a people bearing themselves justly toward each other, but especially toward other nations, will lift the nation high in honor; while on the other hand sin, in the strong sense of national outrages against the great laws of our common humanity, the oppression of the weak, unjust wars, tyrannous exactions—these are the reproach of nations. *H. C.*—Justice, reigning in a nation, puts an honor upon it; a

righteous administration of the government, impartial equity between man and man, public countenance given to religion, the general practice and profession of virtue, the protecting and preserving of virtuous men, charity and compassion to strangers—these *exalt a nation*, they elevate the people's minds and qualify a nation for the favor of God, which will make them high, as a *holy nation* (Deut. 26 : 19). H.

If we never go to war save when justice and righteousness require that we should do so ; if our dealings with any other nation, whether weak or strong, civilized or savage, be rigidly and chivalrously upright ; if our commerce be not corrupted at the fount by that horrible selfishness which sacrifices nations to its greed of gain—then we may expect and we shall receive a blessing from the God of all nations, for then the one principle of all our foreign policy will be this—to aim at ever finding our own highest good in the highest good of all mankind. *Farrar*.—To be known as the wisest people, so that others seek in friendly emulation to learn from us—this is an eminence any patriot well may desire for the land he loves. But *this will depend on the amount of moral culture*

in a people—i.e., on the degree of clearness with which a people see what is right, on the measure of force they put forth in the pursuit of it, and on the firmness with which they insist on the right being paramount to any considerations of power, expediency, or gain. Not only in the individual, the family, and the social life must righteousness be the chief corner-stone of a common weal, but in those acts in which a man has to play the part of a citizen, and in which a nation has to do with other nations. Righteousness may not be eliminated from politics, nor may it play a subordinate part. Universal, eternal, unchangeable, are the laws of righteousness, and by whomsoever they are violated—by individuals, families, churches, or nations—such violation will surely be followed by remorse and shame. *The truest form of moral culture is loyalty to the Divine Being and His commands.* No nation ever can thrive without this. And there is as much obedience to God in the nation as is rendered to Him by individual souls, *and no more.* Hence it is the part of the true patriot who desires his nation's greatness to see that he is living the life which will help to make the nation great. C. C.

CHAPTER XV.

- 1 A SOFT answer turneth away wrath :
But a grievous word stirreth up anger.
- 2 The tongue of the wise uttereth knowledge aright :
But the mouth of fools poureth out folly.
- 3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
Keeping watch upon the evil and the good.
- 4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life :
But perverseness therein is a breaking of the spirit.
- 5 A fool despiseth his father's correction :
But he that regardeth reproof getteth prudence.
- 6 In the house of the righteous is much treasure :
But in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.
- 7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge :
But the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.
- 8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD :
But the prayer of the upright is his delight.
- 9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD :

- But he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.
- 10 There is grievous correction for him that forsaketh the way :
And he that hateth reproof shall die.
- 11 Sheol and Abaddon are before the LORD :
How much more then the hearts of the children of men !
- 12 A scorner loveth not to be reproved :
He will not go unto the wise.
- 13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance :
But by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.
- 14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge :
But the mouth of fools feedeth on folly.
- 15 All the days of the afflicted are evil :
But he that is of a cheerful heart *hath* a continual feast.
- 16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD,
Than great treasure and trouble therewith.
- 17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is,
Than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

- 18 A wrathful man stirreth up contention :
But he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.
- 19 The way of the sluggard is as an hedge of thorns :
But the path of the upright is made an high way.
- 20 A wise son maketh a glad father :
But a foolish man despiseth his mother.
- 21 Folly is joy to him that is void of wisdom :
But a man of understanding maketh straight his going.
- 22 Where there is no counsel, purposes are disappointed :
But in the multitude of counsellors they are established.
- 23 A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth :
And a word in due season, how good is it !
- 24 To the wise the way of life *goeth* upward,
That he may depart from Sheol beneath.
- 25 The LORD will root up the house of the proud :
But he will establish the border of the widow.
- 26 Evil devices are an abomination to the LORD :
But pleasant words *are* pure.
- 27 He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house :
But he that hateth gifts shall live.
- 28 The heart of the righteous studieth to answer :
But the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.
- 29 The LORD is far from the wicked :
But he heareth the prayer of the righteous.
- 30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart :
And good tidings make the bones fat.
- 31 The ear that hearkeneth to the reproof of life
Shall abide among the wise.
- 32 He that refuseth correction despiseth his own soul :
But he that hearkeneth to reproof getteth understanding.
- 33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom ;
And before honour *goeth* humility.

1. AN answer soft, in the sense of mild and soothing, *turns back* wrath ; abates its virus, averts its aim, makes the wrathful man ashamed. But irritating words, such as cause pain, fire up the passion of anger to fury. Even gentle tones of voice and a quiet manner and bearing have a marvellous power to turn away wrath ; even as sharp and violent tones on the contrary excite angry passions to a fiercer flame H. C. —“ A soft answer ” is the *only* effective answer in the way of good results. A severe, sharp manner in response to offensive words or conduct, no matter what the provocation, is the poorest of all vindications, and is certain not to mollify but intensify the spirit that assaults our good name. Gentle words, a forgiving spirit, will do what hard blows and angry epithets and a belligerent attitude never did and never can accomplish. J. M. Sherwood.

Cold words freeze people, hot words scorch them, bitter words make them bitter, and wrathful words make them wrathful. Kind words produce their own image on men’s souls ; and a beautiful image it is. They smooth, and quiet, and comfort the hearer. Pascal. —Hasty words rankle the wound ; soft language dresses it ; forgiveness cures it ; and oblivion takes away the scar. It is more noble by silence to avoid an injury, than by argument to overcome it. Quarles. —Kind words cost no more than unkind ones. Kind words produce kind actions, not only on the part of those to

whom they are addressed, but on the part of those by whom they are employed ; and this habitually in virtue of the principle of association. *Jeremy Bentham*.

Making use of the gentlest and least grating terms that we can will be extremely beneficial ; and accordingly it follows here that “ grievous words stir up anger.” But if such begin to present themselves and struggle for vent, we must resolve to utter as few of any sort as possible ; or, if it become requisite, none at all ; but shut fast the door of our lips till the mastiff within hath done barking. It is a painful restraint, but if we will remain masters of ourselves, it is absolutely necessary. For one hasty expression bursting out makes freer way for another, till at last the banks are levelled, and the torrent carries all before it. “ A patient man, therefore, will bear for a time, and afterward joy shall spring up unto him. He will hide his words for a time, and the lips of many shall declare his wisdom ” (Eccl. 1 : 23, 24). *Archbishop Secker*.

2. **Tongue of the wise.** The power of speech and the use we make of it cannot be overlooked. It is a talent, and not a mean or trivial one, which we all possess. We hold it in trust. We are to use it as stewards who are to give account. This is, indeed, a high standard, but it is the true one. E. H. G. —What a man wants to do in talking is to get and to give as much of the best and most real life that

belongs to the two talkers as the time will let him. Life is short, and conversation apt to run to mere words. *O. W. Holmes.*

Uttereth knowledge aright. Think of the true end of knowledge ; and endeavor not after it for curiosity, contention, or the sake of despising others ; nor yet for profit, reputation, power, or any such inferior consideration ; but solely for the occasions and uses of life ; all along conducting and perfecting it in the spirit of benevolence. *Bacon.*

3. The eye is the best possible symbol from the material world to represent the piercing, pervading, perfect knowledge of the omniscient mind. To say "they are in every place" gives us the conception of His omnipresence, reaching every possible sphere and mode of created existence, showing that the darkness and the light are both alike to Him, and that there is no hiding in any secret place where His mind shall not know our thoughts and deeds most perfectly. The word for "beholding" means scanning, searching out, the term commonly used for the responsible service of the *watchman* whose sole concern is *to see*. The words, "the evil and the good," mean evil men and good men—the responsible agents who are doing either evil or good. The infinite God is bound to take cognizance of their doings. This proverb puts a great and vital truth in its most practical form. *H. C.*

The eye of God is upon every hour of my existence. His Spirit is intimately present with every thought of my heart. His presiding influence keeps by me through the whole current of my restless and ever-changing history. When I walk by the wayside He is along with me. Go where I will, He tends me, watches me, and cares for me. Amid all my forgetfulness of Him, He never forgets me. *Chalmers.*—The right state of mind plainly is, to have the thought of God's presence so perpetually at hand that it shall always start before us whenever it is wanted. So that, whenever we are on the point of doing or saying anything cowardly, or mean, or false, or impure, or proud, or conceited, or unkind, the remembrance that God is looking on shall instantly flash across us and help us to beat down our enemy. This is living with God. And this perpetual though not always conscious sense of God's presence would, if we would let it have its perfect work, gradually act on our characters just as the presence of our fellow-men does. We cannot live long with men without catching something of their manner, of their mode of thought, of their character, of their government of themselves.

So by living in the presence of God we shall assuredly learn something of a heavenly tone, and shake off some of that coarse worldliness, that deeply ingrained selfishness, that silly pride and conceit which now spoils our very best service. *Bishop Temple.*

6. A great treasure is in the house of the righteous, since there dwells *content*, which gratefully esteems what highest love bestows, and though his earthly portion be but scant, enjoys more real happiness than falls to the lot of fortune's favorite. There dwells *love*, which binds hearts as walls are bound, only to part in dust and ruins ; love which makes imparted joy more sweet and sorrow shared the lighter. And where love dwells, there dwells God ! God from above, God from within ; God before our eyes, God in the heart ; God in prosperity, God in pain ; God as guide of soul and mind, God in light and darkness ; is there, can there be, treasure greater than this ? No, answers every heart that God has touched. How different the household which the end of the proverb pictures : "but in the revenues of the wicked is *trouble* !" Sin poisons all—the kindest household, the richest treasure, the most happy marriage. Household piety is thus the only key to household happiness, the means by which even our family distresses, our cares and wants, are changed to gold refined, since if God be for us, who or what can be against us ? *Van O.*

7. The true way to make pure and wholesome our own share in the ceaseless tide of words which is forever flowing around us, is to strive to make pure and wholesome the heart within. If once our hearts have been trained to care very deeply for what is best and purest in life, for what is beautiful and true in thought, our heartiest mirth, our freest words, will not be those of men and women who are indifferent, who care nothing for noble living, nothing for a Christian life, nothing for a Christian spirit. *Dean Bradley.*—Keep clear of personalities in general conversation. Talk of things, objects, thoughts. The smallest minds occupy themselves with persons. Do not needlessly report ill of others. And, as far as possible, dwell on the good side of human beings. There are family boards where a constant process of depreciating, assigning motives, and cutting up character, goes forward. They are not pleasant places. One who is healthy does not wish to dine at a dissecting-table. There is evil enough in men, God knows. But it is not the mission of every young man and woman to detail and report it all. Keep the atmosphere as

pure as possible and fragrant with gentleness and charity. *J. Hall.*

8. The sacrifice offered by the wicked God abhors for the twofold reason—that it lacks sincerity, love, the element of true worship and homage; and also, that it has sinister ends in view, *e.g.*, to propitiate God's favor upon a heart and life of sin; to buy an indulgence; it being an effort to offset so much cost of sacrifice against the permission to go on in sin and rebellion without incurring the awful penalties thereof. On the other hand, the mere prayer of the upright, even though he may have no costly sacrifice to give, is God's delight. The offering of the heart insures His favor. *H. C.*

10. Shall die. If this phraseology has a meaning which is intelligible, it would seem to be that the idea of future retribution must have entered into the minds of those who employed it. No other meaning, which is both significant and true, can well be attached to it. *M. S.*

11. *Sheol*, meaning the underworld, the supposed abode of the dead, thought of as the deepest and darkest of all places. The word for "destruction" (*abaddon*), corresponding to the Greek *apolluōn* (English, *apollyon*), is here another name for the same place. The proverb affirms that this deepest and darkest of places is not too dark for the eye of God to pierce through, but is present to His view, all exposed and naked before Him. How much more then must this be true of the hearts of all the sons of men? The sentiment is therefore essentially the same as in v. 3 above. *H. C.*

13. God made both tears and laughter, and both for kind purposes: Tears hinder sorrows from becoming despair and madness; and laughter is one of the very privileges of reason, being confined to the human species. *Locke.*—A cheerful spirit, under the government of wisdom and grace, is a great ornament to religion, puts a further lustre upon the beauty of holiness, and makes men the more capable of doing good. *H.*—Cheerfulness must be genuine, not put on as a mask that can be removed at pleasure; it must be the outcome of a healthy soul, the shining forth of the light that is within you, the real, actual cheerfulness of one who is not insensible to the troubles and trials of this life, but who lives above them and endures them with cheerful patience because he is true to his convictions of Christian life beyond. *Hallock.*

Every tendency, feeling, and desire of which we are conscious was implanted in us by God for some wise and good purpose. The mere fact that our mouth can be filled with laughter

seems to prove that God designed us to use the power for good ends. Those ends are such as these: the relaxation and refreshment of the mind after labor or sorrow or other severe tension; the encouragement of vigorous work by the pleasure attaching to success; the promotion of that spirit of cordial fellowship and good-will which may be ennobled and sanctified into brotherly kindness and Christian charity. Mirth may intrude into times and places from which it should be excluded; it may degenerate into irreverence and frivolity. He who is frivolous regards everything in a ludicrous or trifling aspect, whether it is some high effort of the intellect, some sublime truth or noble action, or the very revelations of Christ's Gospel. Such is not the condition of him who remembers the duties which he owes to the kind and loving Father who endowed us with the capacity of enjoyment, who knows that his first duty is to serve God and sacrifice his own inclinations, and so accepts laughter and cheerfulness as merciful recreations to the real work of life. *Bishop Cotton.*

15. *Cheerfulness*, which is lasting and diffuses itself over all our actions and enjoyments, is not merely like a feast which is temporary, but is like a *perpetual* feast, *i.e.*, an enduring source of pleasure. *M. S.*—Life to the cheerful is as one perpetual banquet, whether he be poor or rich. That which disturbs the feast is anxiety, the "taking thought" of Matt. 6:34. *E. H. P.*

Between levity and cheerfulness there is a wide distinction; and the mind which is most open to levity is frequently a stranger to cheerfulness. Levity may be the forced production of folly or vice; cheerfulness is the natural offspring of wisdom and virtue only. The one is an occasional agitation; the other a permanent habit. The one degrades the character; the other is perfectly consistent with the dignity of reason, and the steady and manly spirit of religion. Instead of those fallacious hopes of perpetual festivity with which the world would allure us, religion confers upon us a cheerful tranquillity. Instead of dazzling us with meteors of joy which sparkle and expire, it sheds around us a calm and steady light, more solid, more equal, and more lasting. *Blair.*—Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often raised into the greatest transports of mirth who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy. On the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such an exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into any

depths of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning, that breaks through a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of daylight in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity. The cheerful state of mind is a constant habitual gratitude to the great Author of nature. An inward cheerfulness is an implicit praise and thanksgiving to Providence under all its dispensations. It is a kind of acquiescence in the state wherein we are placed, and a secret approbation of the Divine will in His conduct toward man. *Addison.*

16. This sentiment is at once plain and rich. The blessing of God on the humblest crust of bread is sweeter than the abundance of earthly riches, with trouble ever attending. "The fear of the Lord" is used here in the large sense of true piety, including love and trust. It is the filial spirit of sonship, reposing in the universal providence of a Great Father, and rejoicing in His wisdom to withhold as truly as in His bounty to bestow. The trouble incident to "great treasure" is rarely estimated at its full measure. Men are not wont to consider how many have lost their reason under the perpetual strain of the cares and anxieties of a great estate. Over against this, how blessed are those who have only the more of God's presence and love, as they have less of earth and of things earthly! H. C.—Hard work brings health, and an ounce of health is worth a sack of diamonds. It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy that makes happiness. There is more sweet in a spoonful of sugar than in a cask of vinegar. It is not the quantity of our goods, but the blessing of God on what we have that makes us truly rich. *Spurgeon.*—Abundance loads more than it fills, and men's wealth only heightens their wants. The rich man oftener wants a stomach and rest than the poor man wants meat and a bed to lie on. *Fleming.*

17. Even leaving the favor and love of God out of account, there are things in the line of the social affections which far more than counterbalance the ills of frugal or even meagre fare. A dinner of herbs, with the sweet charities of the heart superadded, stands indefinitely far before the stall-fed ox, served up amid the asperities and malignities of cherished hate. H. C.—It is better to have peace without plenty than plenty without peace. Where there is but a slender subsistence, an uninterrupted interchange of mutual endearments among those of the same family imparts a more solid satisfaction than to fare sumptuously every day. *Seed*

19. The proverb condenses a parable. The slothful goes on his journey, and for him the path is thick set with thorns, briars, fences, through which he cannot force his way. For "the righteous" (better, upright), the same path is as the broad raised causeway of the king's highway. (Compare Isa. 40:3.) E. H. P.—Here is lively represented, how laborious sloth proveth in the end; for when things are deferred to the last instant, and nothing prepared beforehand, every step findeth a bricr or an impediment, which catcheth or stoppeth. *Bacon.*

"The way of the slothful man," the course which the sluggard taketh in going about his affairs, "is as a hedge of thorns," is slow and hard; for he goeth creeping about his business; yea, his fears and griefs prick him and stay him like thorns and briars. "But the path of the righteous is as a paved causeway." The order which the godly man taketh is most plain and easy, who so readily runneth on in the works of his calling as if he walked on a paved causeway. *P. Muffet.*

22. The best of plans need wisdom for their effective execution. Since all men, though wise, do not look from the same standpoint, and hence see various aspects of the same thing, it comes to pass that "a multitude of counselors" enhances the probability of attaining the best wisdom and the safest results. H. C.

23. If we speak wisely and well, it will redound to our own comfort and to the advantage of others. *A man has joy by the answer of his mouth;* he may take a pleasure but by no means a pride in having spoken so acceptably and well that the hearers say, "*How good is it, and how much good does it do!*" H.—*A word spoken in due season, how good is it!* There is the word of warning; the word of encouragement; the word of sympathy; the word of congratulation; the word of explanation and apology. To be in any sense "a son of consolation," to be able to make life a little sweeter for others, good a little easier, evil a little more hated and despised, this would be a high privilege for the oldest as well as the youngest among us. Words can do much in this Christian work. Think of the blessing involved in these words of Isaiah, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." If God has not given to each of us the tongue of the learned, He has given to each, if we will but use it, the tongue of truth, of kindness, of purity, of sympathy. *H. M. Butler.*

Sympathy does not lighten a burden of sorrow, but it does help the burdened one to bear his load. If, therefore, you know of a sorrow which presses another's heart, give expression to your sympathy with him, even though you understand that he alone must struggle under the weight of his burden. In one sense your words cannot help him; in another sense they can. Speak them out, therefore, for what they may be worth. He will be grateful for them, and you will be the better for their speaking. H. C. T.—Who can tell the power for good or evil of but one sentence falling on a fellow-creature's ear, or estimate the mighty series of emotions, purposes and actions, of which one articulate breath may be the spring? "A word spoken in season, how good is it?" In another sense than the poet's, all words are winged, and imagination can illy track their flight. Evil or idle words may seem as they are uttered—light and trivial things; yet if light, they are like the filaments of the thistle down—each feathery tuft floating on the slightest breeze bears with it the germ of a noxious weed. Good, kind, true, holy words dropped in conversation may be little thought of, too, but they are like seeds of flower or fruitful tree falling by the wayside, borne by some bird afar, haply thereafter to fringe with beauty some barren mountain-side, or to make glad some lonely wilderness. *North British Review*.

24. Upward. The wise man's chosen way of living tends *upward*, far as possible *away* from the deep abyss of perdition beneath. The proverb seems to involve these two ideas: that he *aims* to remove himself as far as possible from the place and the doom of the wicked; and that such is in fact the *result* of his chosen path of life. H. C.—He that is truly wise has his affections and conversation above, and in the holy way of obedience walketh to eternal life. *Bishop H.*

26. The thoughts and *words of the pure*, being, like themselves, clean, honest, and sincere, *are pleasant words* and pleasant thoughts, well pleasing to the holy God who delights in purity. It may be understood both of their devotions to God and of their discourses with men tending to edification. Both are *then* pleasant when they come from a pure, a purified heart. H.—Speech is a man's most spiritual act, has the least of the material about it, and most of the immaterial. Speech marries body and soul together, takes as little as possible of the body, the mere breath of the mouth, air made audible and articulated, and is, for all the rest, in its life and meaning wholly spiritual. A man's

speech, therefore, is his chief and best manifestation of character. An uncontrolled and conscienceless tongue is the sign of a soul conscienceless and uncontrolled. On the contrary, an offenceless tongue is evidence of perfectness in life. *Budington*.—Burnet bore this testimony to Leighton: "I never heard him say a word in conversation that was not to edification. I never met him in his house but there was something in his look which did me good." *J. Clements*.

28. The emphasis lies on the contrast between the "studying" of the wise before he answers and the hasty "bubbling" or babbling of the foolish. Within the limits of human wisdom and experience the "studying" is right. E. H. P.

29. The promises made to prayer form the main body of all the promises in the Bible. The instances of good connected with it and obtained by it form a rich portion of the sacred history. And then, all the good men, from the beginning of time to this hour, have practised it. God has heard from earth, from every man that ever loved, feared, and served Him. With all good men it has been the primary expedient in seeking to be happy. It has been the grand resource in seeking truth, in performing duty, in resisting temptation, in bearing affliction, and in preparing to meet death. *Foster*.—If we pray for any earthly blessing we must pray for it solely "if it be God's will, if it be for our highest good!" but for all the best things we may pray without misgiving, without reservation, certain that if we ask God will grant them, for what we desire we ask, and what we ask we aim at, and what we aim at we shall attain. No man ever yet asked to be, as the days pass by, more and more noble, and sweet, and pure, and heavenly-minded, no man ever yet prayed that the evil spirits of hatred, and pride, and passion, and worldliness might be cast out of his soul, without his petition being granted and granted to the letter. *Farrar*.

All prayer that is in *faith* includes the leaving it to God to give or to withhold the thing desired, as He sees to be best. And the more a child of God knows of his own liability to be mistaken in his thought of what is for his good, the readier he is to leave the decision, in every case, trustfully with God. Both reason and faith combine to convince the Christian believer that his prayers should always have in them the substance of the quaint prayer of old Thomas Fuller: "Lord, grant me one suit, which is this: Deny me all suits which are bad for me." H. C. T.—A petition may be re-

fused in love ; in which case it is not really refused, but rather granted in a higher shape than was contemplated by the asker. There is a beautiful passage in his *Confessions*, where, concerning some prayers of his mother, Monica, Augustine observes, God gave heed to the *hinge* of her desire, though He did not yield her the boon exactly by the means through which she sought it. Her desire and earnest prayer was that her son might not sail for Italy, so did she dread for him the dangers and temptations which he would encounter at Rome ; he sailed notwithstanding, and it was there at length that he found Christ. *Trench.*

30. Light of the eyes. The brightness which shines in the eyes of one whose heart and face are alike full of joy. Such a look by itself acts with a healing and quickening power. E. H. P.

32. Here again we meet with that peculiar and forcible idiom of the Hebrew, *despiseth his own soul*, *i.e.*, treats it as though he despised it—makes no provision for its safety and welfare. The phrase is of the same tenor as the following : *All that hate Me love death ; he that cometh to Me, and hateth not his father*, etc. M S.

33. Before honor is humility. To stand low in one's own esteem is thus a first condition of standing high in the esteem of others, the wise and the good. Discreet men award honor most freely to those who seem not only worthy to receive, but able to bear it. H. C.—Humility is always ready to give place ; pride is always disputing about preference. If we look narrowly into the world, we find that few people are heartily willing to be below others ; the greatest number think of nothing but gaining a superiority. The primary or first place in humility is the only one to which we are permitted to aspire. *Quarles.*

The answer of Augustine to the question, "What is the first thing in religion ?" *Humility.* "And what the second ?" *Humility.* "And what the third ?" *Humility.* Augustine said truly, when speaking of pride, "That which first overcame man is the last thing he overcomes." *Anon.*—Humility is the same disposition which the Psalmist called a "broken heart," and that consciousness of need which Jesus had in view when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." So far as it has respect to God, it is that docility which is willing to learn what God teaches ; that conscious penury which is willing to accept whatever God proffers ; that submissiveness which is willing to

do what God desires, and to endure whatever God deems needful. And so far as it has respect to man, it is that self-oblivion which is not indignant at being overlooked ; that modesty which is not aware of its own importance ; that considerateness which, in reproving sin and in trying to rescue the sinner, recognizes a brother or sister in the same condemnation, and in this development it is near of kin to that charity "which envieth not ; which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked." *Hamilton.*

Divine revelation is the only system which, either in ancient or in modern times, assigns to humility the rank of a virtue, or makes provision for its cultivation. It assigns to it the highest place, and a sort of pre-eminence among the graces of piety ; bestows upon it the greatest commendations, enforces it by the most powerful motives, encourages it by the richest promises, draws it into exercise by the most splendid examples, and represents it as the brightest jewel in the Christian's crown. Everything in the Word of God is calculated to humble us ; the description which it contains of the Divine character, combining an infinitude of greatness, goodness, and glory, compared with which the loftiest being is an insignificant atom and the purest heart as depravity itself ; the view it gives us of innumerable orders of created intelligences, all above man in the date of their existence, the capacity of their minds, and the elevation of their virtue ; the account it preserves of the intellectual and moral perfection of man in his pristine innocence, the discovery which it thus furnishes of the height from which he has fallen and the contrast it thus draws between his present and his former nature ; the declaration it makes of the purity of the eternal law, and the immeasurable depth at which we are seen to lie beneath our obligations ; the history it exhibits of the circumstances of man's fall, of the progress of his sin, and of the numberless and awful obliquities of his corruptions ; the characteristics it affixes to his situation as a sinner, an enemy of God, a child of wrath ; the method it presents by which he is redeemed from sin and hell—a scheme which he neither invented, nor thought of, nor aided, but which is a plan of *grace*, from first to last, even the grace of God, manifested in and through the propitiation of Christ—a plan which, in all its parts, and in all its bearings, seems expressly devised to exclude boasting. J. A. J.

CHAPTER XVI.

- 1 THE preparations [or, *plans*] of the heart belong to man :
But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.
- 2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes :
But the LORD weigheth the spirits.
- 3 Commit thy works unto the LORD,
And thy thoughts shall be established.
- 4 The LORD hath made every thing for its own end :
Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.
- 5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD :
Though hand *join* in hand, he shall not be unpunished.
- 6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged :
And by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.
- 7 When a man's ways please the LORD,
He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.
- 8 Better is a little with righteousness
Than great revenues with injustice.
- 9 A man's heart deviseth his way :
But the LORD directeth his steps.
- 10 A divine sentence is in the lips of the king :
His mouth shall not transgress in judgment.
- 11 A just balance and scales are the LORD's :
All the weights of the bag are his work.
- 12 It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness :
For the throne is established by righteousness.
- 13 Righteous lips are the delight of kings ;
And they love him that speaketh right.
- 14 The wrath of a king is *as* messengers of death :
But a wise man will pacify it.
- 15 In the light of the king's countenance is life ;
And his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.
- 16 How much better is it to get wisdom than gold !
Yea, to get understanding is rather to be chosen than silver.
- 17 The high way of the upright is to depart from evil :
He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.
- 18 Pride *goeth* before destruction,
And an haughty spirit before a fall.
- 19 Better it is to be of a lowly spirit with the poor,
Than to divide the spoil with the proud.
- 20 He that giveth heed unto the word shall find good :
And whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.
- 21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent :
And the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.
- 22 Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it :
But the correction of fools is *their* folly.
- 23 The heart of the wise instructeth his mouth,
And addeth learning to his lips.
- 24 Pleasant words are *as* a honeycomb,
Sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.
- 25 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
But the end thereof are the ways of death.
- 26 The appetite of the labouring man laboreth for him ;
For his mouth craveth it of him.
- 27 A worthless man deviseth [or, *diggeth up*] mischief :
And in his lips there is as a scorching fire.
- 28 A froward man scattereth abroad strife :
And a whisperer separateth chief friends.
- 29 A man of violence enticeth his neighbour,
And leadeth him in a way that is not good.
- 30 He that shutteth his eyes, *it is* to devise froward things :
He that compresseth his lips bringeth evil to pass.
- 31 The hoary head is a crown of glory,
If it be found in the way of righteousness.
- 32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ;
And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.
- 33 The lot is cast into the lap ;
But the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

1-7. THESE proverbs have, more than any other group, a specially religious character impressed on them. The name of Jehovah as Giver, Guide, Ruler, or Judge meets us in each of them. E. H. P.

1. *Preparations of the heart*, are what the heart devises or intends. But *answer of the tongue*, is an answer to that which the tongue utters—viz., its requests. God only can accomplish what is desired. M. S.—To man

pertains the disposing, the ordering of his heart; the government of his thoughts; the formation of his purposes; the shaping of his petitions in prayer; but to God pertains the answering of his requests, the successful issue of his schemes. Apparently the sentiment of the proverb may cover both the offering of prayer with its answer from the Lord, and the shaping of man's plans with their ultimate issues, which are determined through the agencies of God's providence. H. C.

2. All moralists have recognized the truth of the first clause. We are blind to our own faults, do not see ourselves as others see us. Here, however, there is the true remedy against self-deceit. There is One who tries not the "ways" only, but the "spirits," a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." E. H. P.—The Scriptures do not represent God as a mere spectator, but as a witness and judge, who ponders the thought and action with all their circumstances, and makes a just and righteous estimation of them: "I know, and am a witness, saith the Lord." "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." Nay, "the Lord weigheth the spirits." He, as it were, puts them into a balance, so exactly poised that the smallest grain will turn the scale. R. W.

3. **Commit**; literally, "roll," as a man transfers a burden from his own back to one stronger and better able to bear it. Compare Psalm 22:8; 37:5. *Thoughts*, or the plans or counsels out of which the works spring. E. H. P.—Having formed your plans in the fear of God, seek the aid of His providence in their execution; so shall they be established. The original is expressive, "*Roll your doings over upon the Lord*;" devolve upon Him the ordering of all the events which are to affect you. He will make your plans *firm*, successful. H. C.

Roll thy works upon the Lord, roll the burden of thy care from thyself upon God; not only the works of thy hand, but the workings of thy heart; and then leave it with Him by faith and dependence upon Him, submission and resignation to Him; *the will of the Lord be done*. We may then be easy when we resolve that whatever pleases God shall please us. H.—Duties are ours; events are the Lord's. It is our part to see how we may be approved of Him; and how we may roll the weight of our weak souls, in well-doing, upon Him who is God omnipotent. When what we thus pursue miscarries, it shall neither be our sin nor our cross. Gurnall.

Committing our works to the Lord *is to leave them trustfully in God's hand*. If a man has made good conscience of his work in the sight of the Searcher of hearts, and has spared no honest endeavor, he may then with a quiet heart resign the result to God. It may be something in your business—some step in life of the greatest importance to your own welfare and to that of your family. It may be the health or hazard of the life of some dear friend. You are to go to the edge of your own efforts, both in thinking and doing, and then you are to hand over your work to His keeping who has the blessing that makes rich and adds no sorrow. And then there are cases where the work can be left in God's hand only by our trying to forget it. There are some things which fasten on us with such absorbing interest that they unfit us for everything else. We have done all we can, and yet we brood over the past; we cannot take a step forward, and yet we torment ourselves with the future. It becomes us then to make a resolute effort to cast away the thought of it. There is no better way than to occupy ourselves with something else till the time comes for God to ripen the result. Ker.

It is the will of God that we should in everything make our requests known to Him by prayer and supplication; not to inform or move Him, but to qualify ourselves for the mercy. The waterman in the boat, that with the hook takes hold of the shore, doth not thereby pull the shore to the boat, but the boat to the shore; so in prayer we do not draw the mercy to ourselves, but ourselves to the mercy. H.—We should try to make our daily prayers bear pointedly on our everyday life—on its duties and temptations, its trials and mercies—not praying into the vague and indefinite, but shooting at a mark—"I will *direct* my prayer to Thee." Ker.—We ought not to think little things of no importance, and not to be afraid to pray to God about little things as well as great. There are two reasons which prove that God does not disdain to attend to little things: First, He has made many more little things than great, and has made the greatest things to depend on the least; and second, God is so great, that the difference between what we call great and little is to Him as nothing; and He is so wise, that nothing—not a thought or atom—is small enough to escape His eye. E. R. Conder.

Commit your way, without reserve, to the great Guide who counts the steps of every single day: not seeking active work when He commands us to sit still, nor yet desiring a con-

tinuance of rest when He is beckoning on us to mount the hill—such is the patience and the perseverance of the saints! Cling more closely to the unseen One, just in proportion as you find less satisfaction with that which is seen; and look more longingly to heaven, the less you find on earth—whether around you or before—that promises but little good. Thank God—although it may not be without many tears—for everything that makes you hang more loosely to this earth; and pray that, whatsoever else may disappear, faith may not fail—that patience, too, may have her perfect work. And above all, never let your peace and comfort hang on the fulfilment of a single wish, or look for something quite unusual when life goes smoothly onward in its wonted course, monotonous and slow. Judge of your progress less by any joy which you experience than by the fruit you bear; and let your next great test be whether these two things grow daily dearer to your heart—the cross which God appoints you on this earth, the crown which He reserves for you in heaven! *Van O.*

4. The Lord hath wrought everything for its own end. “Hath ordered all things well,” and this includes the appointment of an “evil day” for “the wicked,” who deserve it. E. H. P.—*Everything* is made in accordance with its *correspondence*, *i.e.*, with the design or purpose to which it answers. *The wicked* are fitted, by their temper and conduct, for the day of retribution. It is an ordinance of God that they shall receive that retribution which is the *answer*, or that which *corresponds*, to their conduct. That “God made everything and every man, to answer the purposes which it or he does actually answer,” cannot be denied, unless we maintain that things and men are what they are, *contrary* to His will. When the text says that *God made the wicked for the day of evil*, I understand it as meaning that God has so arranged things that punishment will certainly follow the commission of sin unless averted by repentance. He has connected together *sinning* and *suffering*, so that there can be no escape for the impenitent sinner. M. S.

This text may be rendered, “God hath ordained everything to that which is fit to it, and the wicked hath He ordained for the day of evil”—that is, the wisdom of God hath fitted one thing to another, punishment to sin, the evil day to the evil-doer. *Archbishop Tillotson.*—Though God made man He did not make evil; sin is no part of His creation. But although He be not the author of sin, yet He controls and overrules the effects of it, making

even the wicked themselves to be instruments of His will, to correct His offending servants or to try their patience; or else to be the executioners of His justice in punishing the ungodly and impenitent. Thus it is that “the Lord hath made all things for Himself,” and His own glory: good men to glorify Him as objects of mercy; the wicked as instruments or examples of His “justice in the day of evil.” *Wogan.*

It is doubly important to understand this proverb: First, because it does teach a great truth; and second, because it does *not* teach a certain great error which has been sometimes imputed to it. The word “made” cannot be restricted to creative work, but legitimately includes all the doings of God—works of providence more specifically than works of creation. The Lord *works* all things in the sense of shaping events and determining issues with special reference to retribution for moral good or evil done by His moral subjects. The Lord works everything *for its own purpose*, *i.e.*, He makes results and issues correspond to the human agencies involved in them. He makes the final result of every earthly life correspond to what that life has been. The sense of the proverb is, that simply in accordance with the great, eternal law of fitness, God brings upon the wicked the destiny of suffering. There is a just and righteous correspondence between the moral activities of His creatures and the reward which a just God will bestow therefor. This has its special manifestation as between sin and suffering; the moral evil that is wickedly, rebelliously done by His creatures, and the evil of suffering righteously inflicted by their Supreme King and Judge. Unfortunately this proverb has sometimes been tortured to say that God has created the wicked for the sake of punishing them, *i.e.*, in order to secure the good results of it in His moral universe. This doctrine has been made specially objectionable by associating it with a practical denial of free moral agency—by assuming that, to accomplish His ends in creating sinners for perdition, God holds them to a life of sinning by a law of necessity which they cannot break. Nothing can be wider from the truth than this, or more repugnant to every sentiment of benevolence or even of justice. We need to remember that God punishes the wicked for their voluntary rebellion against His authority—for their purposed antagonism toward all righteousness, goodness, and truth. We need to distinguish broadly between God’s supposed creating of sinners in order that they may sin, that so He may damn them for the

good to come from it ; and, on the other hand, His actually creating them that they might be obedient and so be blest, and then punishing them only because they *will not* obey Him, but will perversely scorn their Maker, disown His authority, abuse His love, and set at nought all His efforts to reclaim and save them. Our proverb affirms that in this sense God shapes the destiny of the wicked to their just doom of suffering. When they absolutely *will* consecrate themselves to sinning and to rebellion, the only use God can make of them is to give them their just doom of woe, and make them an example to His moral universe. The only issue that can bear a just relation of correspondence to their horribly wicked life is this awful doom of suffering. H. C.

5. See 11 : 21.

6. See here, First, how the guilt of sin is taken away from us ; by the *mercy and truth* of God, mercy in promising, truth in performing ; the mercy and truth which kiss each other in Jesus Christ the Mediator ; by the covenant of grace, in which mercy and truth shine so bright ; by our mercy and truth, as the condition of the pardon, and a necessary qualification for it ; by these, and not by the legal sacrifices (Micah 6 : 7, 8). Second, how the power of sin is broken in us ; by the principles of *mercy and truth* commanding in us, the corrupt inclinations are purged out ; so we may take the former part ; however, *by the fear of the Lord*, and the influence of that fear, *men depart from evil ; they will not dare to sin against God who keep up in their minds a holy dread and reverence of Him.* H.

7. A truly good man will be blessed of God and have peace even on the part of his enemies. They will find little to censure, and have little or no pretext for injury. Of course, this is only a *general truth*, to which are not a few exceptions. Such are the cases of persecution for righteousness' sake. M. S.—Not that the enemies are simply kept quiet through their knowledge that the good man is under God's protection, but that goodness has power to charm and win them to itself. E. H. P.

8. Wealth obtained in violation of justice brings with it the curse of the Almighty ; sooner or later the bitterest self-condemnation, and the detestation of all the good. With stinging words of terrible truth the Apostle James puts this case (5 : 1-5). H. C.—Be careful rather of what thou *dost* than of what thou *hast* ; for what thou hast is none of thine, and will leave thee at thy death. But what thou doest is thine, and will follow thee and plead

for thee or against thee at thy resurrection. Quarles.

9. It is for man to lay his plans, the Lord only can confirm them. This rests in His good pleasure. H. C.—If men *devise their way* so as to make God's glory their end and His will their rule, they may expect that He will *direct their steps* by His Spirit and grace, so that they shall not miss their way nor come short of their end. But let men devise their worldly affairs ever so politically, and with ever so great a probability of success, yet God has the ordering of the event, and sometimes *directs their steps* to that which they least intended. H.

We lay our plans and set about our projects exactly as though we were our own masters, without any reference to God or any suspicion whatever of His interference with us. But what takes place ? Events that we did not foresee suddenly rise up and baffle us. They first hamper our schemes and then demolish them. We find out that we have been calculating in the dark. We are forced to feel that we are not our own masters nor the authors of our own destinies, that there is a hand which overrules us and all that befalls us. Our ignorance of the future brings our best-laid schemes to ruin ; our ruined schemes tell us of our dependence on the world's great Master. The truth comes out—we are “under the mighty hand of God.” C. Bradley.—When our eye is keenest we see but a little of the great whole even of our own life, and that little imperfectly. The unseen hand casts the shuttle its own way, and the loom clanks and yields its many-colored threads in its own time and fashion. 'Tis true that we can affect the weaving of our own life ; we can brighten the colors ; we can change the very pattern in a measure. But never by criticism on the process itself ; only by living, and thus furnishing better materials to Him who is making the web. The deep truth is, that what we call “things” are not much in themselves at all. The substance of things really lies partly in ourselves. We make them this or that, much or little, things of help or things of hindrance, by what we are in ourselves, and by the manner in which we receive them. Raleigh.

The greatest events of our lives are those in which we have no option. It is not left to man's determination in what age of the world he shall be born ; whether in Christian or in savage land ; whether poor or rich ; whether feeble or hardy ; whether a genius or a fool ; whether he shall enjoy parental care or be an orphan ; whether he shall dwell in a realm of

peace or have his whole character and actions moulded by revolution and war. And we might carry out the enumeration to a thousand particulars, each bearing directly on his happiness. J. W. A.

Every agent in society, every element in nature, and even the angels of God are charged with some office affecting us. The connections we form, our prosperity and adversity, and every circumstance relating to our condition are of the Divine choosing. It must be so, and if it were not, we could never be conducted safely through such a world as this. None but God, having control of every influence affecting us, and adapting everything with foresight of what we are and what we need, could secure our spiritual advancement and bring us at last to glory. How suitable then that we should commit to Him the choosing of all things for us. H. H.

This morning's waking was the touch of His hand. Last week's plan of life or study was looked down upon with His sympathizing notice. When you left your home the other day, your heart devised your way, but the Lord did really direct your steps. When you prayed that God would keep those you left there, your prayer was verily heard, and whether by granting or denying, it will be God Himself that answers you, the personal, listening, loving God. No God that is hid away in heartless laws, but the friendly God of each separate soul now, as of the elders and prophets, of John and James, of Peter and Simeon, of Mary Magdalen and Jairus's daughter. Judæa did not exhaust His love. He is the God of our houses and streets and schools as well; of our parents' solicitude, of our children's happiness, of our own frail feet. The Christian's God is a reality. No reality on earth so real! F. D. H.

10. Solomon thought of civil government as ordained of God, and of the king therefore as ruling under God, and, while standing in his proper relations toward God, as divinely guided in his decision. This proverb was not intended as a history of the kings of the earth. It is rather a view of their relations to God and of their consequent responsibilities and duties. If you may assume that they are acting honestly and truly for God, then these things will be true.

11. A just weight and balance. These are the Lord's in the sense that He requires them and enjoins the fair dealing which they provide for and were intended to secure. "*His work*," seems to imply that He enjoined their use as a safeguard against the inherent

human selfishness which would otherwise develop itself in fraud or injustice. The Hebrew word for "weights" is *stones*, suggesting the ancient usage of small stones for weights. The dealer carried them in a bag. Hence the greater facility for deceit, since he might and sometimes did carry one set of stones to buy with and another to sell with. See 20:10 below, where this form of fraud is condemned. H. C. —God requires exact justice in all our dealings, and therefore it is our duty to take care that the weights and balance be just. *Wells*.

15. In the previous verse the *wrath* of a king has been, by a striking metaphor, represented as messengers of death. In this verse "the light of His countenance," and "His favor" supply the antithesis to his wrath; and in these is life, for the object of the royal complacency is in no danger from the messengers of death. Apply this to the King of kings, and what a sublime lesson on life! Here we have suggested the blessedness of reconciliation and the conditions of serviceableness. A holy life in its ideal combines two elements: abiding in the light and love of God and yielding fruit in service. He who is reconciled to God in Christ abides in the light of His smile. He walks in light and dwells in love, and so every condition of holiness and happiness is assured. And the same Divine favor bestows the abundance of the Spirit, the latter rain which brings fertility, which insures fruitfulness as well as holiness. *Pierson*.

16. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! Better than gold! But gold is good, and he who would put forward with success the far higher worth of wisdom had better not begin his argument by putting too low an estimate on gold. Gold is full of service; has in it wondrous potencies for smoothing life-travel, lightening burdens, cheering the poor, helping the needy, and glorifying God. Yet "how much better is it to get wisdom than gold!" Gold can be but an external possession, a mere accessory of life. Wisdom is a well, a fountain, *in* the Christian's soul. It is fed by secret channels direct from the river of life, clear as crystal, which proceedeth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The joy of the Lord is his strength, the strength of the Lord is his joy; and, filled from that perennial Fount of good, he lives, thrives, rejoices, utterly independent of the lack of gold. *Wray*. —Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth and to be preferred before it. Grace is more valuable than gold. Grace is the gift of God's peculiar favor; gold only of common

providence. Grace is for ourselves ; gold for others. Grace is for the soul and eternity ; gold only for the body and time. Grace will stand us in stead in a dying hour, when gold will do us no good. H.

17. The upright will not wittingly go in the path of evil, and therefore they turn away into another and safer way. Whoever means to remain secure must look well to the way which he takes, and adhere constantly to it. The participles here are employed to designate what is habitual and constant. M. S.—Very noticeably the way of the upright is here a *high-way*, raised and made smooth and dry for perfect travel ; not rough, or low and miry as in the state of nature. Such is the way of life which belongs to the upright. The thing said of it here is that it turns squarely away from evil—leads off to avoid all sin and so all ill. He who carefully keeps this way will preserve not merely his strength from waste and himself from weariness, but his *soul* from the evils that imperil human souls in this world of sin.

18. According to all social and moral law, destruction follows close upon foregoing pride. Who does not know that a proud and haughty spirit betrays folly, forfeits esteem and love, provokes the social and moral retribution that is itself destruction and a fall ? If this be true in human society and under its moral laws, how much more under the righteous retributions of Jehovah's administration ! H. C.—In the course of Providence it is a general rule that "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Nebuchadnezzar was spared while he went on ravaging kingdoms and shedding blood ; but when he forgot God in his pride, then he was condemned to grovel in the dust as a brute. When Rabshakeh came defying the God of Israel, it was then that he was blasted in his pride. Herod was suffered to go on in his evil and bloody deeds ; it was not until he made an oration and received the idolatry of his audience, and gave not God the glory ; it was not until that hour of impious pride that God smote him with death. R. Hall.

19. As the preceding proverb gives us the ruinous results of pride, this gives the worth of humility. "Dividing the spoil," in a country for ages but too familiar with the ways of savage robbery and plunder as well as of war, was naturally significant of victory, booty, and exuberant joy. But better are the humble of heart who have sympathy with the lowly than they who associate with the proud even in their hours of most exultant hilarity.

20. "Handleth wisely," translates a Hebrew

word which means simply to consider attentively, wisely, intelligently. "Matter" represents the very common Hebrew term for *word*, which may, however, bear the sense of *thing*. Hence we may choose between referring it to God's revealed Word, or to things in general that are proper subjects of consideration. Probably the latter sense should be taken, the proverb commending serious, careful thought on all important subjects. Blessed are they who add to such diligent consideration a real and hearty trust in the Lord. H. C.

Faith grounds itself, solely and wholly, on an inner and vital relation of the soul to its source. . . . We stand, by the necessities of our existence, in the relationship of sons to a Father. Unless this relationship actually exists, there could be no faith ; if it exists, then faith is bound to appear. . . . It is in a spirit of sonship that faith reveals and realizes itself. Faith is the spirit of confident surrender, which can only be justified by an inner identification of life. Its primary note, therefore, will be *trust*. Faith will ever discover, when its reason for action or belief are traced to their last source, that it arrives at a point where its only and all-sufficient plea will be "God is my Father ; I am His child." And the growth of faith means the gradual increase of the personal contact, the spiritual intimacy between Father and child. H. S. Holland.

21. *Sweetness of the lips* means gentle and persuasive language. This sweetness attracts listeners and so increases knowledge.

25. See 14 : 12 for the same. In other words, "A man may come to regard a thing as right, which in the end will prove to be destructive and fatal." How often is this maxim still verified ! M. S.—It mainly applies to the man who, however many virtues he may possess, however upright he may be in the duties of life, however carefully he may attend to the outward duties of religion, does not receive it into his heart nor act on its considerations as a motive. This way of life usually seems right unto a man. He wins esteem from without, and has no accusing conscience within. But he has not the fear of God before his eyes. This approved way must end in the way of death. Improbable as it may seem that the correct liver, the blameless and upright man, should perish at last, it is but a necessary consequence from his having put by and rejected the only remedy which God has provided for the universal taint of our nature. Alford.

Morality, taken as apart from religion, is just that negative species of virtue which consists in

not doing what is scandalously depraved or wicked. But there is no heart of holy principle in it, any more than there is in the worst of felonies. It is the very same thing, as respects the denial of God, or the state of personal separation from God, that distinguishes all the most reprobate forms of character. A correct, outwardly virtuous man is the principle of sin well-dressed and respectably kept—nothing more. And what can we know of sin, or how can we feel our deep spiritual need, when we are living so respectably and maintain in the outward life a show of so great integrity, and even so much of refinement often in what is called virtue. True conviction of sin, how difficult is it, when its appearances and modes of life are so fair, when it twines itself so cunningly about or creeps so insidiously into our amiable qualities, and sets off its internal disorders by so many outward charms and attractions! And even if the delicate, always correct sinner keeps to his decency here, the proper end will show itself hereafter, and then it will be seen how dark, after all, how deep in criminality, how bronzed in guilty thought, is every soul becoming under even the fairest shows of virtue, coupled with neglect of God, and separated from His personal love. How necessary is it, then, that every man out of Christ, not living in any vicious practice, should make a study of this subtle, cunningly veiled character, the state of reputable sin, and study it long enough to fathom its real import. Look into the secret motives and springs of your character; inspect and study long enough to really perceive the strange, wild current of your thoughts; comprehend the deep ferment of your lusts, enmities, and passions; hunt down the selfish principle which instigates and misdirects and turns off your whole life from God, setting all your aims on issues that reject Him; ask, in a word, how this respectable sin appears when viewed inwardly; how, if unrestrained by pride and the conventional rules of decency and character, it would appear outwardly. Fathom the deep hunger of your soul, and listen to its inward wail of bondage, its mournful, unuttered cry of want after God. Ask it of the enlightening Spirit of God, that He will open to your view yourself, and make you to know all that is inmost, deepest, most hidden in the habitually veiled enormity of your sin! H. B.

27. *Digs up evil*—that is, obtains it as the reward of his efforts. *The worthless man* here seems to be described in the second clause, as a detractor, calumniator. *On his lips* (the words

which hang upon his lips) is that *which resembles a scorching fire, i.e.*, heated calumnious speeches. M. S.—A burning fire on his lips betokens slander—malign, Satantic slander—as if every word were hot shot, or a poisoned arrow for the bosom of friend or foe, almost without discrimination. Of such sin, what language, what figures of speech can over-paint its vileness! H. C.

30. As in 6:13, we have the physiognomy of the slanderer brought before us—the half-closed eyes that never look you straight in the face, the restlessness or cunning of which biting the lips is the surest indication. E. H. P.—Slander is diabolical. Its essence is hatred of good, and envy of those who possess it. James makes this specially heinous by declaring that to slander men is to slander God, for “man was made in the image of God.” Slander does not often employ gross methods. The terrors of the law prevent that. The mediæval princes found subtle poisons that could diffuse their deadly venom through the fragrance of roses; so men offer the fragrance of praise with malevolent reservations. These are the modes of polite society, but they all spring from the same state of heart, and cannot be condemned in words stronger than the apostle’s, for he says this state of mind is “earthly, sensual, and devil-possessed.” II. W. Warren.

31. Under every dispensation the hoary head is a crown of glory to the righteous. Longevity, which in the case of the wicked only aggravates sin and its awful reckoning, affords to true believers a longer term of useful service and holy example, increased proficiency in gifts and graces, and a corresponding recompense. Old age has its appropriate beauty no less than youth. To the eye which can wisely discern there is a mature loveliness in the “shock of corn that cometh in its season.” J. W. A.

It is one of the happy facts in our life that old age can be postponed. The wheel of time cannot be stopped, but the spirit can find the long-sought fountain of youth. Who can doubt that the Christian temper, manifesting itself in sweet charity, in reverence for the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost, in the expulsion of selfishness and the whole brood of unChristly tempers, in the welcome admission of whatever is of good report and in submission to the will of God—who can doubt that these preserve the youth of the spirit? No sad experience can break down the buoyancy of such a spirit. With all ages, knowledges, pure pleasures, growths, and activities, it is in sympathy. To have this is to be always young. No artist has

ever painted an old angel. The fulness of the eternal life keeps them young, as it keeps those who know something of it in the life which now is. *Christian Advocate.*

Disraeli puts these words into the mouth of one of his characters: "Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret." A sad and cheerless view of life's progress that! It may be true, in measure, of a life separated from godliness; it certainly is not true of a life allied with godliness. Let there be "life and godliness," and then youth is not a blunder, but a wise purpose and a glowing hope; manhood is not a struggle only, but a conquest and a joy; old age is not a regret, but a rich memory and a glorious prospect. *R. P. Macmaster.*

32. Moderation of one's own passions is better than deeds of valor; and subjugation of one's own mind, than the conquest of a city. Clearly there is a high and noble moral tone in this. M. S.—Man has no capacity for power more noble than that by which he holds every passion in due self-control; no ruling is greater or better than self-ruling. H. C.—He that gets and keeps the mastery of his passions, he *is better than the mighty, better than he that by a long siege takes a city* or by a long war subdues a country. Behold, a greater than Alexander or Cæsar is here! H.—Behold thy trophies within thee, not without thee. Lead thine own captivity captive, be Cæsar unto thyself, and enjoy that empire which every man gives himself. He who is thus his own monarch contentedly sways the sceptre of himself, not envying the glory of crowned heads and Elohim of the earth. *Browne.*

The will is strengthened by obedience. Many suppose that real strength of the will is secured by giving it free play. Not a bit of it. You weaken it in that way. Obedience to a legitimate law is a source of moral strength and power. What is obedience? Is it submission to a power superior to your own? No. Is it weakness bowing to strength? No. Obedience is submission to an authority whose claims are admitted. If man is royal when he rules over nature, he is most royal, most imperial, when he rules himself—when he has the courage, the power, the kingly courage and power to crush himself in the presence of an authority which he has ascertained has a right to his obedience. *Liddon.*

Spiritual strength consists of two things: power of will and power of self-restraint. It requires two things, therefore, for its existence: strong feelings and strong command over them. We mistake strong feelings for strong character.

A man who bears all before him is the weak man; it is his passions that are strong; he, mastered by them, is weak. You must measure the strength of a man by the power of the feelings which he subdues, not by the power of those which subdue him. He who with strong passions remains chaste; he who, keenly sensitive, with manly power of indignation in him, can be provoked, and yet refrain himself, and forgive—these are strong men, spiritual heroes. Spiritual strength is reached by successive steps. Fresh strength is got by every mastery of self. In the spiritual warfare every sin you slay, the spirit of that sin passes into you transformed into strength; every passion, not merely kept in abeyance by asceticism, but subdued by a higher impulse, is so much character strengthened. The strength of the passion not expended is yours still. *F. W. R.*

The strongest characters are the gentlest, and a thousand-fold more strength is shown by maintaining a meek and quiet spirit, than by giving way to rage and anger. The sweetest-tempered men in the world—those who show forth the glory of a meek spirit—are not "good-natured men," but those who have triumphed over pain, and irritability, and fiery temperaments. To indulge or excuse anger on account of natural temperament or infirmity is simply to foster and feed a malignant temper, until at last it will rage and rule within like the devils in the demoniac of Gadara. There is nothing pleasurable, or great, or noble, in anger, that any one should seek to keep or cherish it. It is the foe of health, of soul-peace and social comfort. The irritable man is a discomfort to himself as well as an annoyance to others. But disastrous as are the effects of anger in the natural and social life, they are still worse in a spiritual life. How many Christians are cursed with barrenness and leanness of soul because of infirmities of temper which they never seek to subdue. When such dispositions abound, the Holy Spirit is grieved. He will not brood over such souls, for He is the Spirit of love, tenderness, and gentleness. The spirit of prayer is wanting in such hearts; the angry man cannot pray. We cannot see God face to face in the communion of the closet when the sullen gloom of anger hangs like a cloud on our hearts. It also drives out all spiritual joy and brotherly love. It dulls the affections and makes the heart cold and dull. Surely God who loves His children and desires their happiness, has not meant that they should remain here under the dominion of this evil passion. He who mourns over an undisciplined, unsanctified temper may

rest assured that the victory is attainable, and that he may be adorned with and enjoy the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. *Niccolls.*

The lowliest man who employs his love and gratitude, the best of his affections, upon God, the best of beings; who has a particular regard and esteem for the virtuous few, compassion for the distressed, and a fixed and extensive good-will for all; who strives to subdue his greatest enemy, his unruly passion; who promotes a good understanding between neighbors, composes and adjusts differences, does justice to an injured character and acts of charity to distressed worth; who cherishes his friends, forgives his enemies, and even serves them in any pressing exigency; who abhors vice and pities the vicious person; such a man has juster pretensions to the title of heroism, as heroism implies a certain nobleness and elevation of soul breaking forth into correspondent actions, than he who conquers armies or makes the most glaring figure in the eye of an injudicious world. *Seed.*

The right self-control is the handmaid of self-denial. Self-control is the dominion of the will over our nature, over inclination and temperament, and therewith likewise over all that is meant to be the will's ministering instrument, bodily as well as spiritual. But self-control in itself may still be in the service of egoism, whereas the essence of self-denial consists in killing egoism in its root, not merely this or that inclination, but making a sacrifice of the whole natural man, while the will entirely submits to the Divine will, and the man himself dies with Christ to live with Him. Self-denial, in its deepest root, is obedience, is the practical strengthening of humility, and the actual death of pride. *Martensen.*

Plainly, there are two kinds of self-denial: the one from fear—formal, slavish, barren; the other from love—blessing the spirit and strengthening it in virtue. So far as Christianity requires self-denial, it is uniformly and only of this latter kind. Utterly do they misapprehend the religion of Christ who regard it as gloomy and austere—as a system of formal prohibitions and restraints. No; its self-denial is from love. It is a system of prohibition and restraint only as it is a system of excitement and guidance. Let Christians be fully inspired with the great positive ideas and motives of their religion, and it is impossible there should be in their deportment anything austere, or sanctimonious, or gloomy, more than there was in the deportment of Christ and of His apostles. It is only under the influence of self-denial from

love that the highest character can be formed. M. H.—Self-denial, for the sake of self-denial, does no good; self-sacrifice for its own sake is no religious act at all. If you give up a meal for the sake of showing power over self, or for the sake of self-discipline, it is the most miserable of all delusions. You are not more religious in doing this than before. This is mere self-culture, and self-culture being occupied forever about self, leaves you only in that circle of self from which religion is to free you; but to give up a meal that one you love may have it is properly a religious act—no hard and dismal duty, because made easy by affection. To bear pain for the sake of bearing it has in it no moral quality at all, but to bear it rather than surrender truth, or in order to save another, is positive enjoyment as well as ennobling to the soul. So sacrifice alone, bare and unrelieved, is ghastly, unnatural, and dead; but self-sacrifice, illuminated by love, is warmth and life. F. W. R.

33. Into the lap. The process seems to have been that the lots were thrown into the gathered folds of a robe and then drawn out.

Disposing; better, the judgment or sentence which depends upon the lot. Where all human influence was excluded, where everything seemed the merest chance, there the faith of the Israelite teacher recognized the guidance of a higher will. E. H. P.—This is obviously the *sacred lot*—a method of appealing to God for His decision. The reader may see cases of this in Lev. 16: 8-10; Josh. 15-19; 1 Chron. 24: 5, 7. It must not be inferred that this appeal to God can be properly made without special direction from Himself. Such direction preceded its use in the cases referred to. It cannot be well to presume upon God's interposition to express His will by the lot unless He has authorized it in the special case. H. C.

The Divine providence orders and directs those things which to us are perfectly casual and fortuitous. Nothing comes to pass by chance, nor is any event determined by a blind fortune, but everything by the will and counsel of God. What man has neither eye nor hand in God is intimately concerned in. All the disposals of Providence concerning our affairs we must look upon to be the directing of our lot, the determining of what we referred to God, and must be reconciled to them accordingly. H.—He who recognizes the unfailing supervision and control of all the forces of nature, and of all the courses of history, by the wise and loving sovereignty of Him in whom "we live, and move, and have our being," realizes

that all chance and happening and accident are subject to both the knowledge and the consent of God, and that the falling of every leaf and the turning of every card or die, happen alike by God's will and favor. In this light it is that every chance, or accident, or happening, is a special or a particular providence ; a signal exercise of God's directing power. S. S. T.

CHAPTER XVII.

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| <p>1 BETTER is a dry morsel and quietness therewith,
Than an house full of feasting with strife.</p> <p>2 A servant that dealeth wisely shall have rule
over a son that causeth shame,
And shall have part in the inheritance among
the brethren.</p> <p>3 The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace
for gold :
But the LORD trieth the hearts.</p> <p>4 An evil-doer giveth heed to wicked lips ;
And a liar giveth ear to a mischievous
tongue.</p> <p>5 Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his
Maker :
And he that is glad at calamity shall not be
unpunished.</p> <p>6 Children's children are the crown of old men ;
And the glory of children are their fathers.</p> <p>7 Excellent speech becometh not a fool :
Much less do lying lips a prince.</p> <p>8 A gift is <i>as</i> a precious stone in the eyes of
him that hath it :
Whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.</p> <p>9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh
love :
But he that harpeth on a matter separateth
chief friends.</p> <p>10 A rebuke entereth deeper into one that hath
understanding
Than an hundred stripes into a fool.</p> <p>11 An evil man seeketh only rebellion ;
Therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent
against him.</p> <p>12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man,
Rather than a fool in his folly.</p> <p>13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good,
Evil shall not depart from his house.</p> <p>14 The beginning of strife is <i>as</i> when one letteth
out water :
Therefore leave off contention, before there
be quarrelling</p> | <p>15 He that justifieth the wicked, and he that
condemneth the righteous,
Both of them alike are an abomination to the
LORD.</p> <p>16 Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a
fool to buy wisdom,
Seeing he hath no understanding ?</p> <p>17 A friend loveth at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.</p> <p>18 A man void of understanding striketh hands,
And becometh surety in the presence of his
neighbour.</p> <p>19 He loveth transgression that loveth strife :
He that raiseth high his gate seeketh de-
struction.</p> <p>20 He that hath a froward heart findeth no
good :
And he that hath a perverse tongue falleth
into mischief.</p> <p>21 He that begetteth a fool <i>doeth it</i> to his sor-
row :
And the father of a fool hath no joy.</p> <p>22 A merry heart is a good medicine :
But a broken spirit drieth up the bones.</p> <p>23 A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom.,
To pervert the ways of judgment.</p> <p>24 Wisdom is before the face of him that hath
understanding :
But the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the
earth.</p> <p>25 A foolish son is a grief to his father,
And bitterness to her that bare him.</p> <p>26 Also to punish the righteous is not good,
<i>Nor</i> to smite the noble for <i>their</i> uprightness.</p> <p>27 He that spareth his words hath knowledge :
And he that is of a cool spirit is a man of
understanding.</p> <p>28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is
counted wise :
When he shutteth his lips, he is <i>esteemed as</i>
prudent.</p> |
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3. THAT is, the fining-pot may try silver, and the furnace disclose true gold ; but only Jehovah can explore the human heart. M. S. —The skill of man finds out the agents and invents the processes for proving and purifying gold and silver ; the Lord does the same thing

as to human hearts. How can the dross of sin abide the ordeal of His furnace and of His fires ! H. C.—Wonderful as is the separation of the pure metal from the dross with which it has mingled, there is something yet more wonderful in the Divine discipline which purifies the good that lies hid, like a grain of gold, even in rough and common natures, and frees it from all admixture of evil. The same similitude meets us again in Mal. 3 : 2 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 7. E. H. P.

In the original languages the same words are often used for trial and temptation ; and so it is likewise in our old English. Hence it is, that although James tells us, “ God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth any man,” yet Moses assures us, that “ God tempted Abraham,” when He commanded him to sacrifice his son. In our language use hath now made it otherwise ; for to try is taken in a good sense and may be applied to God ; whereas to tempt is at present always taken in a bad sense, and can only be applied in strictness to the devil or his instruments. The difference between the trier and the tempter lies in this : he who tries wishes we may resist ; whereas he who tempts wishes we may yield. God, in this latter sense, “ tempteth no man”—that is, leadeth no man into sin ; but, in the former sense, He tempteth all men—that is, He tries their faith and obedience, not for His own information, because He knows all men and foresees all things ; but for the exercise of their virtue and the manifestation of His own justice and mercy. In order to these ends He tries our works, if we may believe Paul, as by fire, and lays open to ourselves or others both the principles of our minds and the dispositions of our hearts, by a kind of torture resembling that wherewith the qualities of silver are proved in the fining-pot, and the purity of gold in the furnace. Temptations to sin are and must be, as long as there are moral beings in the world. Man, during his state of trial, must expect to find the chief force of these temptations arising from within, out of the miserable corruption of his nature ; and cannot hope for happiness till this corruption is purged out, even by a fierce encounter with these trials, which, if he cannot stand, he must come out but the more corrupt and vicious. Silver and gold are seldom or never found in the earth without dross, nor man without a natural inclination to sin ; but “ the fining-pot for silver and the furnace for gold, and God’s trials for the heart of man.” *Skelton.*

It is wonderful to see with what skill God has adjusted all our experiences, so as to make

us sensible of our errors and defects. As the invisible ink is brought out in a distinct color by holding what is written to the fire, so God brings out all our faults and our sins by the scorches of experience through which we are ever passing in the fiery trials of life. If we are proud, He has a way to make us see it, and to break down our pride. If we cherish any subtle grudge or animosity, He will somehow call it out and make us see it. If we are selfish, or covetous, or jealous, or frivolous, or captious, or self-indulgent, or sensual, or self-confident, or fanatical, or self-righteous, or partial, or obstinate, or prejudiced, or uncharitable, or censorious—whatever fault we have in us, no matter how subtle or how ingeniously covered it may be, He has us in the furnace of trial and correction, where He is turning us round and round, lifting us in prosperity, crushing us in adversity, subduing us with afflictions, tempting out our faults and then chastising them, humbling us, correcting us, softening, tempering, soothing, fortifying, refining, healing, and so managing us as to detect all our drossy and bad qualities, and separate them from us. He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, and allows nothing to escape either His discovery or our correction. H. B.

4. *A liar gives* heed to a malicious, back-biting tongue, that he may have something to graft his lies upon, with which to give them some color of truth and so to support them. Sinners will strengthen one another’s hands ; and those show they are bad themselves who court the acquaintance and need the assistance of those that are bad. H.

5. “ He that mocketh the poor ” is said “ to reproach his Maker ”—that is, he throws an injurious reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of Divine providence, which hath appointed this inequality of conditions among men, for exercising the patience and resignation of the poor, and that the rich may be furnished with constant opportunities of acknowledging their obligations to God and their dependence upon Him for all they possess by distributing what they can spare from their own necessary uses for the relief and comfort of their needy brethren. R. W.

6. The special point dwelt on is the reciprocity of good in sustained family relationships. A long line of children’s children is the glory of old age, a long line of ancestors the glory of their descendants. E. H. P.—The reflection of honor between fathers and sons is reciprocal. Each class, therefore, has this high and noble motive to a virtuous life : the father, that he

may be a glory to his sons ; sons and grandsons, that they may be a crown of honor as well as a perpetual joy to their aged father. H. C.—It is an honor to parents, when they are old, to leave children that tread in the steps of their virtues, and are likely to maintain and advance the reputation of their families. It is an honor to children to have wise and godly parents, and to have them continued to them even after they are themselves grown up and settled in the world. H.

9. He that covereth a transgression seeketh love. He that concealeth within himself an offence done to him by his friend, takes a course to maintain friendship and love. *Bishop Hall.*—It is a noble and great thing to cover the blemishes and to excuse the failings of a friend ; to draw a curtain before his stains, and to display his perfections ; to bury his weaknesses in silence, but to proclaim his virtues upon the housetop. *South.*

10. Sentiment : “ A man of intelligence will be more influenced by mere rebuke than the fool by severe scourging.” M. S.—A gentle reproof will enter not only into the head but into the heart of a wise man, so as to have a strong influence upon him ; for if but a hint be given to conscience, let it alone to carry it on and prosecute it. H.

14. Where water is dammed up, a small breach in the dam occasions a rush of water, which speedily widens that breach, and then it rolls on in impetuous torrents. So with strife, which, though trifling at first, when persevered in, becomes impetuous and mischievous. Therefore, *Let alone strife, before it rolls on* like the impetuous torrent. M. S.—While passion is kept within its proper channel, all is safe and well ; but if once we suffer the banks that should dam it to be broken down, it roars and rages like a mighty torrent and overspreads and carries all before it. *Dean Stanhope.*—*Strife* is sometimes compared to fire and sometimes to water. They are both unmerciful elements when once they are let loose. It is easy to open the sluices and let the water out, but who can call the floods back again ? And so when the burning is once begun, it is more easily propagated and continued than extinguished. T. M.

15. As God’s glorious nature and His infinitely just administration hold Him to condemn the wicked and to justify the righteous, He must instinctively abhor those who seek to reverse His policy and frustrate His aims of justice. Why should not he both abhor them with the utmost ardor of His holy soul, and

withstand them with the full energy of His almighty arm ? H. C.

16. That is, a man cannot purchase wisdom for any price who is without understanding ; for this is absolutely necessary to the acquisition of it. M. S.—It is not for the lack of brains but for the lack of a morally right heart that such multitudes never pay out the money God has put into their hands for the genuine article—heavenly wisdom. This fact may well be for a lamentation and a marvel ! H. C.

17. *At all times*—i.e., as well in adversity as in prosperity, a true friend will love. *A brother for adversity* is one who will act the part of a brother in a season of adversity. M. S.—What is meant is not a depreciation of the ties of friendship as compared with those of kindred, but to exalt the true friend to the uttermost. It describes, as in 18 : 24, the “ friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” *At all times a friend loveth, but in adversity he is born* (sc. becomes) a brother. E. H. P.

The last fruit of friendship (which is, like the pomegranate, full of many kernels) is aid and bearing a part in all actions and occasions of life. Here the best way to represent to life the manifold use of friendship is to cast and see how many things there are which a man cannot do himself ; and then it will appear that it was a sparing saying of the ancients to say, “ that a friend is another himself ; for that a friend is far more than himself.” *Bacon.*—A true friend hath the skill and observation of the best physician ; the diligence and vigilance of the best nurse ; and the tenderness and patience of the best mother. *Lord Clarendon.*

The best physic for man is man ; such a man as is an able and faithful friend, to whom we may impart our joys, fears, griefs, hopes, counsels, or whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it. A true friend is not born every day. While thou hast him, prize him, and let him well perceive it, by communicating thy joys and sorrows as is fitting ; so shalt thou enlarge and redouble the one, and mitigate and lessen the other. For as in bodies union strengtheneth and cherisheth any natural action, and on the other side weakeneth and dulleth any violent impression, so in minds. No man imparts his loves unto his friend but loves the more. None imparts his sorrows to his friend but grieves the less. *N. Rogers, 1632.*—Friendship includes devotion, self-sacrifice, defence against all things—including calumny and misfortune ; but, best of all, joy in another’s joy, and exultation in his prosperity ; this being in my mind the highest proof of friendship. It is easy to sym-

pathize with misfortune—the heart full of envy and malice might even do that ; but devoid of these must that beautiful soul be that can look upon a friend's success with gladness, having no other interest than that of pure enjoyment of his happiness. *T. Buchanan Read.*

There are friends whose companionship is constant inspiration and strength and encouragement. Their hearts are so full of love and kindness and appreciation and sympathy, that we have no disposition to hide from, but rather to confide to them our difficulties, sorrows, failures. Our weakness finds comfort in their strength ; our impatience in their patience ; our unwisdom and folly in their broad, calm views of life ; our irritation over trifles in their serenity and faith that all things will work for good. Their observation of our conduct under circumstances of trial and irritation does not burden or chagrin us, but is helpful and cheering, because we feel that they understand and appreciate our difficulties. *Interior.*—A blessed thing it is for any man or woman to have a friend ; one human soul whom we can trust utterly ; who knows the best and the worst of us, and who loves us in spite of all our faults ; who will speak the honest truth to us, while the world flatters us to our face and laughs at us behind our back ; who will give us counsel and reproof in the day of prosperity and self-conceit ; but who, again, will comfort and encourage us in the day of difficulty and sorrow, when the world leaves us alone to fight our own battle as we can. *Kingsley.*

Jesus is the “ Brother born for adversity,” to comfort in and support under it. A friend and a brother makes one's sorrows and sufferings his own. So did Jesus. Our sins were His, He “ bore them in His own body.” “ He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” And did He love before time ? Does He love at all times ? Then what shall separate from His love ? “ In all things we are more than conquerors, through Him who loved us.” As Jesus' power is equal to His love, death, which parts the dearest friends and dissolves the sweetest friendships below, shall introduce us to the nearest enjoyment of Him, our best Friend and glorified Redeemer above ; for He says, “ Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” *W. Mason.*

19. Building the gates of one's palace very high evinces pride, provokes envy, and precipitates ruin. As a very high gate is dangerously exposed to a sudden and crashing fall, so the pride which it represents works in a thousand ways to bring down destruction. To connect

the last clause with the first, we have only to consider that such manifestations of pride naturally provoke contention, and hence also the sin and ruin which ensue. *H. C.*

20. Two bad things are here reproved. The first is the sullen, snarling spirit of discontent, which kills all hearty, genial gaiety ; the second is the vicious habit of unbridled, flippant talk, which goes far to destroy all cheerful, loving fellowship. The vice of the age is a spirit of detraction. Such a spirit, says Solomon, *findeth no good*. The man that is always looking out for what is wrong will gradually lose his interest in that which is perfect, till all that is simply pure and gentle and true and lovely will appear to him tame and insipid. The froward heart, which is always on the watch for faults and failure, goes on to require these things as its very daily food, and at last waxes frantic when there is no fault to find. *A. Jessopp.*

22. If in modern parlance we distinguish between cheerfulness and mirth, ascribing to the latter a more giddy, unseasonable, and vociferous effusion of hilarity, we shall lose the entire force of this text and other passages. *Mirth*, in good old English, included even the graver kinds of cheerfulness. The old Psalter praises God with “ awful mirth ;” both words being such as have suffered deflection. And the adage of Solomon is cleared by the exhortation of the Apostle James : “ Is any merry, let him sing Psalms.” A merry heart is therefore precisely a cheerful heart ; and that it “ doeth good like a medicine,” is one of those truths which every one of us has found true, blessed be God, in his own experience. *J. W. A.*—Medicines are either preventive or curative ; but prevention is better than cure. And a cheerful heart is both a preventive and a cure ; but it is better to take it in time. The wise economy which bids us by simple precautions avert pronounced forms of disease, also bids us avert the heavier depressions of sorrow by cultivating an equable and hopeful habit of mind. The best tonic, the best medicine, is a cheerful heart. *Cox.*

To be free-minded and cheerfully disposed at hours of meat, and of sleep, and of exercise, is one of the best precepts of long lasting. As for the passions and studies of the mind, avoid envy, anxious fears, anger, fretting inward, subtle and knotty inquisitions, joys and exhilarations in excess, sadness not communicated. Entertain hopes, cheerfulness rather than joy, variety of delights rather than surfeit of them. *Bacon.*—It is healthful to be cheerful. The Lord is for the body, and has provided for it not only meat but medicine, and has here told us that the

best medicine is *a merry heart* ; not a heart addicted to vain, carnal, sensual mirth ; Solomon himself said of that mirth, It is not medicine but madness ; it is not food but poison ; *What doth it ?* But he means a heart rejoicing in God and serving Him with gladness, and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments, and particularly that of pleasant conversation. It is a great mercy that God gives us *leave* to be cheerful and *cause* to be cheerful ; especially if by His grace He gives us *hearts* to be cheerful. But if mirth be a medicine (understand it of diversion and recreation), it must be used sparingly only when there is occasion, not turned into food, and it must be used medicinally *as a prescribed regimen* and by rule. The sorrows of the mind often contribute very much to the sickness of the body ; *A broken spirit*, sunk by the burden of afflictions, and especially a conscience wounded with the sense of guilt and fear of wrath, *dries the bones*, wastes the radical moisture, exhausts the very marrow, and makes the body a mere skeleton. We should therefore watch and pray against all melancholy indispositions, for they lead us into trouble as well as into temptation. H.

23. Another protest against the pervading corruption of Oriental judges. The words "from the bosom," from the fold of the garment, rather than from the bag or girdle in which money was usually carried, possibly point to the stealthiness with which the gift is offered. E. H. P.

24. The wisdom of wise men is at hand, ready for use, always *before him*, under his eye ; but, over against this, the eyes of the fool see none of the present facts of his condition—overlook the very things he needs to see in order to judge well and to act discreetly. What eyes he has are in the ends of the earth, occupied upon things utterly remote and valueless. H. C.—He is to be reckoned an intelligent man that not only has wisdom, but has it ready when he has occasion for it. He lays his *wisdom before him* as his card and compass which he steers by, has his eye always upon it, as he that writes has on his copy ; and then he has it *before him*, it is not to seek but still at hand. He that has a giddy head, a roving, rambling fancy, will never be fit for any solid business. He is a fool and good for nothing whose *eyes are in the ends of the earth*, here and there and everywhere ; anywhere but where they should be ; who cannot fix his thoughts to one subject nor pursue any one purpose with anything of steadiness. When his mind should be applied to his study and business, it is filled with a thousand things foreign and impertinent. H.

27. I prefer to transpose both clauses and render thus : He who spareth his words evinces good sense [valuable knowledge], and the man of cool, self-governed spirit is the man of understanding. The author of these proverbs accounts much talk *prima facie* proof of a shallow mind ; and, on the other hand, a prudent reserve in speech a proof of good sense and a fair intelligence. H. C.

28. *Is wise*—i.e., is reputed or regarded as wise ; for, so far as this goes, he acts wisely. The second clause is a more general proposition, extending the remark to all who act in the like way. M. S.—This proverb follows out the thought of the next preceding, and confirms the general doctrine taught there. Even a fool, if he had the sense to hold his peace, might have some reputation for wisdom. So strong are the convictions of mankind to the point, that much talk goes with little thought, and that reserve in speech often signifies more than average thinking. H. C.

He who thinks much says but little in proportion to his thoughts. He selects that language which will convey his ideas in the most explicit and distinct manner. He tries to compress as much thought as possible into a few words. W. Irving.—Think not silence the wisdom of fools, but, if rightly timed, the honor of wise men, who have not the infirmity, but the virtue of taciturnity, and speak not out of the abundance, but the well-weighed thoughts of their hearts. Such silence may be eloquence, and speak thy worth above the power of words. Browne.

He that has knowledge and aims to do good with it, is careful when he does speak to speak to the purpose, and therefore says little that he may take time to deliberate upon it. He spares his words because they are better spared than ill spent. This is generally taken for such a sure indication of wisdom, that a fool may gain the reputation of being a wise man, if he have but wit enough to hold his tongue, to hear, and see, and say little. If a fool hold his peace, men of candor will think him wise, because nothing appears to the contrary, and because it will be thought that he is making observations on what others say, and gaining experience, and is consulting with himself what he shall say, that he may speak pertinently. See how easy it is to gain men's good opinion and to impose upon them. But when a *fool holds his peace*, God knows his heart and the folly that is bound there ; thoughts are words to Him, and therefore He cannot be deceived in His judgment of men. H.

CHAPTER XVIII.

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| <p>1 HE that separateth himself seeketh <i>his own</i> desire,
And rageth against all sound wisdom.</p> <p>2 A fool hath no delight in understanding,
But only that his heart may reveal itself.</p> <p>3 When the wicked cometh, there cometh also contempt,
And with ignominy <i>cometh</i> reproach.</p> <p>4 The words of a man's mouth are <i>as</i> deep waters ;
The wellspring of wisdom is <i>as</i> a flowing brook.</p> <p>5 To accept the person of the wicked is not good,
<i>Nor</i> to turn aside the righteous in judgment.</p> <p>6 A fool's lips enter into contention,
And his mouth calleth for stripes.</p> <p>7 A fool's mouth is his destruction,
And his lips are the snare of his soul.</p> <p>8 The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels,
And they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.</p> <p>9 He also that is slack in his work
Is brother to him that is a destroyer.</p> <p>10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower :
The righteous runneth into it, and is safe.</p> <p>11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city,
And as an high wall in his own imagination.</p> <p>12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty,
And before honour <i>goeth</i> humility.</p> <p>13 He that giveth answer before he heareth,
It is folly and shame unto him.</p> | <p>14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity ;
But a broken spirit who can bear ?</p> <p>15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge ;
And the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.</p> <p>16 A man's gift maketh room for him,
And bringeth him before great men.</p> <p>17 He that pleadeth his cause first <i>seemeth</i> just ;
But his neighbour cometh and searcheth him out.</p> <p>18 The lot causeth contentions to cease,
And parteth between the mighty.</p> <p>19 A brother offended <i>is harder to be won</i> than a strong city :
And <i>such</i> contentions are like the bars of a castle.</p> <p>20 A man's belly shall be filled with the fruit of his mouth ;
With the increase of his lips shall he be satisfied.</p> <p>21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue ;
And they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.</p> <p>22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing,
And obtaineth favour of the LORD.</p> <p>23 The poor useth intreaties :
But the rich answereth roughly.</p> <p>24 He that maketh many friends <i>doeth it</i> to his own destruction :
But there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.</p> |
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1. THE man who is of unsocial and misanthropic disposition and therefore separates himself from intercourse with others, becomes selfish in his aims, and as a result quarrels with true wisdom rather than secures its favor and aid. *Chambers*.—Selfishness will thus become exclusive and supreme, and break through all bounds to gratify itself.

4. *The words*, in the first clause, are those of a wise and prudent man. They are like *deep waters*, because they consist of thoughts not easily sounded to the bottom, and still less capable of exhaustion. (See 20 : 5 ; Eccl. 7 : 24.) The second image is still more lively : *A fountain of wisdom is a stream gushing forth*—*i.e.*, it is like a stream which, gushing forth from the earth, is always full and refreshing. M. S.—His words have a savor of good sense

which impress you as coming from a deep fountain of thought and wisdom.

5. To “accept the person” is to regard the merely external circumstances, as opposed to regarding the essential right and equity of the case. It includes all forms of personal favoritism, whether on the ground of sympathy with the character, or of relationship, or the influence of bribes. It is not good to respect the person of the wicked for the purpose and with the result of frustrating the righteous in judgment. Such regard to persons must always be a flagrant sin before God, not only because He hates all injustice, but especially because this form of injustice frustrates the very provisions God has made for securing justice to those who are both innocent and powerless to assert and maintain it. H. C.

6, 7. The verses go together, speaking of the results of the "fool's" temper. First, "contention," then "blows," then "destruction." E. H. P.

8. The point of the proverb is the depraved pleasure which the uncharitable take in hearing whispered backbitings. They welcome such utterances, and swallow them eagerly, as if they were rare dainties. Here applies the saying, "The receiver is as bad as the thief." If there were no willing listeners there would be no eager whisperers of unkind things. A witty English divine once said that the tale-bearer should be suspended by a nail through his tongue, and the tale-hearer by nails through his ears. *Chambers*.—An acquaintance with society furnishes ample proof that the statement is true to life. Gossip that besmirches the reputation of some prominent man is eagerly swallowed. When it is whispered into the ear by some newsmonger, it is supposed to be a precious piece of information confided to the receiver. In this particular, society is not very different from what it was in Solomon's time. *Zion's Herald*.

When the backbiter cannot deny the metal to be good and the stamp to be true, he clippeth it and so rejecteth it from being current; he misconstrues doubtful actions unfavorably, and throws over the very virtues of his neighbors the name of faults; he diminishes from the excellence of good actions by showing how much better they might have been done; and attempts to destroy all confidence in long-established character, and all respect for it, by pitching on some single act of imprudence and expanding it into a magnitude which truth and justice forbid. Such is the backbiter, whose crime is compounded of the ingredients of ill-humor, pride, selfishness, envy, malice, falsehood, cowardice, and folly. Backbiting must be peculiarly hateful to God. He is the God of truth, and therefore detesteth lying, of which detraction ever hath a spice. He is the God of justice, and therefore doth especially abhor wronging the best persons and actions. He is the God of love, and therefore cannot but loath this capital violation of charity. He is jealous of His glory, and therefore cannot endure it to be abused by slurring his good gifts and graces. He cannot but hate the offence which approacheth to that most heinous and unpardonable sin, that consisteth in defaming the excellent works performed by Divine power and goodness, ascribing them to bad causes. *Anon*.

The malicious utterance of a slander is likely to defeat its purpose by its very exhibit of mal-

ice; whereas a slander that is simply repeated by one person after another, with its steadily increasing scope and explicitness, as a matter of gossip, or as an item of popular information, often seems too natural to be wholly a fabrication, and it gradually gains a credence that properly belongs to established truth. It is the "they say," that slips so easily from the unwatched tongue, and that enters so freely the unguarded ear. And there is never a time, nor ever a social circle, when and where there is not some slander concerning innocent and unsuspecting persons, which is passed from one to another unthinkingly, on the basis, or the baselessness, of this indefinite origin. He who consents to hear such a charge against another without giving it a challenge, accords his tacit approval to a slander. He who consents to pass such a charge along as something which he has heard and has not challenged, becomes himself a slander-monger, if not indeed a wilful slanderer. He, on the other hand, who challenges any such slander, and who rebukes its utterer, is so far an upright man and a public benefactor. S. S. T.

9. As bearing upon the accumulation of wealth and the comforts of life, there is little to choose between the slack hand and the wasteful one. They are near enough alike to be brothers. The difference between not getting and wasting is of small account. The Hebrew phrase for "great waster" is expressive; "master of wasting," as if he had the art to perfection. H. C.—**Is a destroyer.** Idleness hinders the progress of the individual and the community. The idler is a robber of both God and man. Man was made to work, irrespective of the fortune he may possess. The young man of wealth, or the young woman of fashion and fortune, who has nothing to do but to find some new way of doing nothing is lower down in the scale of being than the vagabond who may have sunk to his position for lack of work. There are thousands of such creatures of affectation and *ennui*, living men and women literally buried in tombs of physical, intellectual, and spiritual idleness. They never take a thought of the end for which they were created. They scout the idea that the Creator intended them to be of use and service to humanity. They think a selfish, useless, barren life will answer the expectations of that God who designed everything to some useful end, and they libel the name of their Creator by impressing their enfeebled rational faculties into the service of killing time. There are many who regard their wealth, talent, and position

as a Divine trust ; who look upon life as a stewardship for which they must give account ; whose hands and heart are in every good work ; and who work as hard in their sphere as any street laborer in his. But these are not of that class. *G. L. Spining.*

10. All the names of God being significant of His attributes, expressing some of the various qualities of His being and character, the phrase, "the name of the Lord," differs not materially from the word *Lord* only. In this proverb the meaning is simply that the Lord Himself is a strong tower. The figure is military. Towers, built high, were a very effective protection against the missile weapons of ancient warfare. The Hebrew word for "is safe" means is up on high, and therefore out of the reach of darts, javelins, or the sling-stones of war. *H. C.*—What name is this? "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means spare the guilty." This name is our strong tower ; this God is our stronghold. We may take refuge in every name and attribute as in a separate chamber of our fortress. Let a man comprehend the import of the declaration that God is good ; let him think who and how great God is ; what and how copious His all-sufficiency ; how boundless His ability to bless ; how exquisite the pleasures at His right hand forevermore ; and then let him stand and wonder at the greatness of affection affirmed of such a Being, who sits at the fount of all conceivable good, creates all susceptibilities of enjoyment, and floods them with holiness. Let him muse on this till he has begun to conceive what God is, what God's love is, and how it must gush from this spring-head, and stream into swelling rivers of deep and spreading beneficence, of vast and awful bliss, from its sources in the heart of infinite favor. Let a man thus understand and thus believe that God loves him—and he is a happy man ; he now knows that God is "a strong tower." *J. W. A.*

11. The rich, instead of looking to Jehovah for protection, trust in their riches—which are a high wall, in their own imagination, but not so in reality. In 10 : 15, the like words are employed, but in a different relation. *M. S.*—What the name of the Lord is to the righteous, that wealth is to the rich. He flees to it for refuge as to a strong city ; but it is so "in his own conceit" only. The word so rendered signifies primarily an "image," and so "imagination." *E. H. P.*

10, 11. We have here the "strong tower"

(v. 10) and the "strong city" (v. 11) ; the man lifted up above danger on the battlements of the one, and the man fancying himself to be high above it (and only fancying himself) in the imaginary safety of the other. Consider first the two fortresses. One need only name them side by side to feel the full force of the intended contrast. On the one hand the name of the Lord, with all its depths and glories, with its blaze of lustrous purity and infinitudes of inexhaustible power ; and on the other "the rich man's wealth." The name of the Lord, of course, is the biblical expression for the whole character of God, as He has made it known to us, or, in other words, for God Himself, as He has been pleased to reveal Himself to mankind. His name proclaims Him to be self-existent, and, as self-existent, eternal ; and as eternal, changeless ; and as self-existent, eternal, changeless, infinite in all the qualities by which He makes Himself known. But far beyond the sweep of that great name, Jehovah, is the knowledge of God's deepest heart and character, which we learn in Him who said, "I have declared Thy name unto My brethren, and will declare it." The name that is the strong tower is the name "My Father !" A Father of infinite tenderness, and wisdom, and power. Look at the other fortress : "The rich man's wealth." Of course we have not to deal here only with wealth in the shape of money, but all external and material goods ; the whole mass of the things seen and temporal are gathered together here in this phrase. Men use their imaginations in very strange fashion, and make, or fancy they make, for themselves out of the things of the present life a defence and a strength. Of all delusions that can beset you in your course, none will work more disastrously than the notion that the *summum bonum*, the shield and the stay of a man is the abundance of the things that he possesses. Consider next how to get into the true refuge. How does a man make this world his defence ? By trusting to it. He that says to the fine gold, "Thou art my confidence," has made it his fortress ; and that is how you will make God your "strong tower"—by trusting to Him. *A. M.*

12. Pride is the presage of ruin, and ruin will at last be the punishment of pride ; for *before destruction* men are commonly so infatuated by the just judgment of God, that they are more haughty than ever ; that their ruin may be the sorer and the more surprising. Humility is the presage of honor, and prepares men for it, and honor shall at length be the reward of humility, as He had said before (15 : 33). That has need

to be often said, which men are so loath to believe. H.—Without humility where is the love of man, that love which consists in the cultivation of charitable affections, in the exercise of charitable services from one toward another? Without humility where is poverty of spirit and contrition of soul? where are meekness and mercy? where is purity of heart? where are peace and righteousness? where is repentance for sin, and faith exclusive of every meritorious claim, faith in the blood of the Redeemer? A proud Christian is a contradiction in terms; humility is the very essence of the Gospel! *Bishop Mant.*

13. Those that take a pride in being quick, commonly fall under the just reproach of being impertinent. It is folly for a man to go about to speak to a thing which he does not understand, or to pass sentence upon a matter which he is not truly and fully informed of, and has not patience to make a strict inquiry into; and if it be folly, it is and will be shame. H.

14. *Infirmity* relates to pains of *body*; a *dejected spirit* to a *mind* sad and cast down. The first can be endured by firmness and resolution; but the last—who can endure it, when resolution for endurance is gone? M. S.—Let this shell of nature, the body, be under never so much pain and agony, yet a well-settled and resolved mind will be able to buoy it up and keep it from sinking; the spirit will bear, and by bearing will at length master these infirmities. But when the spirit itself is wounded and struck through, the grief presently becomes victorious and intolerable. *South.*

The spirit of a man may sustain the common infirmities of nature, and the incidental evils of life; but a wounded spirit—a spirit pierced with a sense of unrepented guilt—who can bear? Guilt will have its day of account; and when this day comes, be it sooner or be it later, whither shall the sinner fly? With what arguments shall he sustain the anguish of his wounded soul? S. Carr.—Dreadful apprehensions of God's anger, whether well or ill founded, are among the most intolerable of all our states of mind. The citadel itself is assaulted. The supporting power itself cries for support. J. W. A.

The mind fortified by principles of moral counsel and constancy, can endure the assault of external evils; “but a wounded spirit who can bear?” This is most insupportable, when the sting and remorse of the mind is from the sense of guilt. The guilty conscience turns “the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood;” the precious promises of the Gospel

that assure favor and pardon to returning and relenting sinners are turned into arguments of despair by reflecting upon the abuse and provocation of mercy, so that the advocate in God's bosom becomes the accuser. Whatever the soul-wounded sinner sees or hears afflicts him; whatever he thinks torments him. All the diversion in the world, business, pleasures, merry conversation, comedies, are ineffectual to give freedom from those stings and furies in the breast. *Bates.*

Look which way it will for relief, the wounded spirit can discover nothing but aggravations of its wretchedness. If it looks within, it finds nothing but darkness and tempest and despair. If it looks around on its temporal possessions, it sees nothing but gifts of God which it has abused, and for its abuse of which it must give a terrible account. If it looks back, it sees a life spent in neglect of God, and ten thousand sins following it as accusers to the judgment-seat. If it looks forward, it sees that judgment-seat to which it must come, and where it expects nothing but a sentence of final condemnation. If it looks up, it sees that God who is wounding it, and whose anger seems to search it like fire; and if it looks downward, it sees the gulf which awaits its fall. Not even to death can it look forward as the termination of its miseries, for it fears that its miseries will then receive a terrible increase. True, there is one object to which it might look for relief and find it. It might look to the Saviour, the great Physician, and obtain not only a cure for its wounds, but everlasting life. *Payson.*

In the commission of evil fear no man so much as thyself; another is but one witness against thee; thou art a thousand; another thou mayest avoid; thyself thou canst not. Wick- edness is its own punishment. *Quarles.*

How deeply seated the conscience is in the human soul is seen in the effect which sudden calamities produce on guilty men, even when unaided by any determinate notion or fears of punishment after death. The wretched criminal, as one rudely awakened from a long sleep, bewildered with the new light, and half recollecting, half striving to recollect, a fearful something, he knows not what, but which he will recognize as soon as he hears the name, already interprets the calamities into *judgments*, executions of a sentence passed by an *invisible* Judge; as if the vast pyre of the Last Judgment were already kindled in an unknown distance, and some flashes of it, darting forth at intervals beyond the rest, were flying and lighting upon the face of his soul. *Coleridge.*—The guilty

soul cannot keep its own secret. It is false to itself ; or rather it feels an irresistible impulse of conscience to be true to itself. It labors under its guilty possession, and knows not what to do with it. The human heart was not made for the residence of such an inhabitant. It finds itself preyed on by a torment which it dares not acknowledge to God or man. A vulture is devouring it, and it can ask no sympathy or assistance either from heaven or earth. The secret which the murderer possesses soon comes to possess him ; and like the evil spirits of which we read, it overcomes him and leads him whithersoever it will. He feels it beating at his heart, rising to his throat, and demanding disclosure. He thinks the whole world sees it in his face, reads it in his eyes, and almost hears its workings in the very silence of his thoughts. It has become his master. It betrays his discretion, it breaks down his courage, it conquers his prudence. When suspicions from without begin to embarrass him, and the net of circumstances to entangle him, the fatal secret struggles with still greater violence to burst forth. It must be confessed, it will be confessed ; there is no refuge from confession but suicide, and suicide is confession. *D. Webster.*

We have little reason for troubling ourselves in questions that relate to a place of future misery. Enough to know that the mind is its own place, and will make a place of woe to itself, whithersoever it goes, in a life of sin and separation from God. If the sceptic bolts upon us with the question, Where is hell ? or the question, whether we suppose that a God of infinite goodness has occupied Himself in excavating and fashioning a local state for the torment of bad men ? it is enough to answer that a bad mind carries a hell with it, excavates its own place of torment, makes it deep and hot as with fire, and will assuredly be in that place, whatever else may be true. A good mind sits in heavenly places, because it is good. Go where it will it is with God, and God is templed eternally in it ; God is His own everlasting beatitude and peace. Exactly what is true of place beyond this, or of place as related to the condition of happy spirits, we do not know, but shall know hereafter. Enough that the bad mind will at least be its own bad state and element. It has the fire and brimstone in itself, and the suffocating smoke, and the darkness, and the thirst, and the worm that never dies—testifying always, “I myself am hell.” It would turn the golden pavement into burning marl, and the hymns and hallelujahs of the blessed into shrieks of discord. *H. B.*

Men tell us that God is too merciful—too kind to punish. We try to believe them, knowing that God is a thousand-fold milder, more merciful than thought of ours can conceive ; but we have only to look within and around us upon the sufferings that sin inflicts, and the vision of a Divinity that does not, will not punish, vanishes like a dream of the night. Where then can our conscience-troubled spirits find repose, where but in Him who hath taken our sin upon Him, in whom there is redemption for us through His blood, even the forgiveness of all our sins ? If we may go to Christ for anything, it is for this forgiveness. *Hanna.*—Pardon is the only fit remedy for a troubled conscience ; what can give ease to a wounded spirit but pardoning mercy ? Offer Him the honors and pleasures of the world, 'tis as if you bring flowers and music to one that is condemned. Nothing but a pardon sealed with the blood of the Redeemer can ease a wounded spirit. *Watson.*—Peace of conscience is nothing but the echo of pardoning mercy, which, sounding in the conscience, brings the soul into a sweet rest with the pleasant music it makes. *Gurnall.*

15. With the wise and prudent there is no loss of time. “Heart” and “ear”—the mind working within, or gathering from without materials for its thought—are, through this channel or that, ever gaining knowledge. *E. H. P.*—Those that are prudent will seek knowledge, and apply their ear and heart to the pursuit of it ; their ear to attend to the means of knowledge, and their heart to mix faith with what they hear and make a good improvement of it. *H.*

17. You hear the first man state his case ; he seems to have right on his side ; but when his neighbor comes in to reply, and to give his side of the case, he searches out his opponent, canvasses the facts, and often puts a new face upon the whole matter. The moral is, therefore, hear the other side before you judge. *H. C.*—However some may affect to dislike controversy, it can never be of ultimate disadvantage to the interests of truth or the happiness of mankind. Where it is indulged to its full extent, a multitude of ridiculous opinions will no doubt be obtruded upon the public ; but any ill influence they may produce cannot continue long, as they are sure to be opposed with at least equal ability and that superior advantage which is ever attendant on truth. The colors with which wit or eloquence may have adorned a false system will gradually die away, sophistry be detected, and everything estimated at length according to its value. *R. Hall.*

There is a wide difference between religious controversy and religious discussion. Controversy is contradiction. Discussion is examination. The one is intellectual pugilism. The other is co-operative study. The purpose of the one is victory—of the other, truth. The two are immediately distinguishable from each other by the spirit they each manifest. Controversy is angered by opposing truth, and seeks to minify or pervert it. Discussion gladly recognizes an opposing truth, and reconstructs for its reception. Discussion is modest and never self-seeking. Controversy is loud and sometimes unscrupulous. *Interior.*—Controversy may for the present be needful; but there never was and never will be need for its rancor. We may have all its victories without its virulence; and its truths without its personal tragedies; and that will be the most wholesome state of the Church when discussions wax kindly, and controversies are conducted in the spirit, not of party feuds, but of friendly investigations. Iron sharpens iron; and the day may come when, like honest experimenters in physics, earnest inquirers in theology will employ their respective acumen, not in perplexing one another, but in pursuing joint researches; and will find their full reward, not in a bewildered public, but in a text clearly interpreted and a doctrine finally demonstrated, in a long debate concluded, and a weary question forever set at rest. *Hamilton.*

If, in Christian or social intercourse, we wish to deliver any man from what we think error, we must do so by putting him in the way of convincing himself. To beat him down by unreasoning opposition, or even by an irresistible argument, may please us, but is not likely to gain him. There is a great chasm between achieving a victory and making a conquest, and the completeness of the first often prevents the last. To respect a man's freedom, never to press him so hard as to humiliate him, to give him the clew that may help him to guide himself to the right, is according to the Divine model, and would aid us in serving at the same time both our fellowmen and the truth. *Ker.*

In my youth I did not sufficiently discern how much, in most of our controversies, is verbal and upon mutual mistakes. And I knew not how impatient divines were of being contradicted, nor how it would stir up all their powers to defend what they have once said, and to rise up against the truth which is thus set upon them as the mortal enemy of their honor; and I knew not how hardly men's minds are changed from their former apprehensions, be the evi-

dence never so plain. In my youth I was quickly past my fundamentals, and was running up into a multitude of controversies, and greatly delighted with metaphysical and scholastic writings (though I must need say my preaching was still on the necessary points), but the older I grew the smaller stress I laid upon these controversies and curiosities, though still my intellect abhorreth confusion. *Baxter.*

Our religion is a religion that dares to be understood, that offers itself to the search of the inquisitive, to the inspection of the severest and the most awakened reason; for, being secure of her substantial truth and purity, she knows that for her to be seen and looked into is to be embraced and admired, as there needs no greater argument for men to love the light than to see it. *South.*

19. A readiness to detect a mote in a brother's or sister's eye—a habit of cherishing hard thoughts against them—the outrage of speaking against thine own mother's child—an inflammable disposition, which gets angry with them, either without a cause or with a very small one—all these are indications of a want of real family love. Fault-finding and quarrelling, vanity and conceited comparisons, ill-natured remarks, should all be carefully avoided; for they give offence, and the offence rankles in the memory forever. Very difficult are they to be eradicated and supplanted by right affections. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city. *Anon.*—Under the best of circumstances there will be frequent trials of temper among brothers and sisters. Our varying dispositions, our self-will, our disappointments, tend to express themselves in differences and wrangling and in warm and uncourteous words. Temptations of this kind will occur where there is no selfishness in the general sense of that term, and no real jealousy. But if family life is to be sunny and sweet, we must carefully guard ourselves here. Our duty is to try and understand each other's dispositions, to put the most generous interpretation on each other's words and actions, even when we dislike them. We must carefully cultivate that love which, unless it “suffereth long,” is not love at all, much less that love which should prevail in families. *W. Braden.*

20. Words spoken will bring their proper retribution. There is an *income* from them—a result of good or ill according to what they are. As the fruit and income from hand labor goes to supply the demands of the digestive organs and of the animal frame, so the lips also have their income—*i.e.*, a just retribution. *H. C.*—We

ought to take as great care about the words we speak as we do about the fruit of our trees, or the increase of the earth which we are to eat ; for, according as they are wholesome or unwholesome, so will the pleasure or the pain be wherewith we shall be filled. *Bishop Patrick.*

21. The tongue can bless or curse. It can whisper slander or utter praise. It can speak in tones of kindness, or send forth the ravings of bitter and vindictive passion. It can vent the oath, or pour out the homage of devout and humble prayer. It can set before us the sublimest truths of heaven, or utter the blasphemies of the world of woe. It can carry to other hearts the sympathy of our own, or mix in their eup of anguish new dregs of bitterness. It can speak in the sufferer's ear in tones that seem like heavenly music, or give back sounds echoed as it were from the desperation of fiends. Who does not know, who has not felt, the power of the tongue—in the social circle, in the public assembly, in the scenes of business, pleasure, or devotion ? E. H. G.

It is startling to think what Christian conversation might be, of what it ought to be, and then of what it is. Why should such a power for good be wasted, or far worse than wasted ? Why should our Christian development be retarded by the misuse of the marvellous gift of speech ? It were far better that one were born dumb than that, having a tongue, one should use it to scatter evil and sorrow, or to sow the seeds of bitterness and pain. Our Lord said we must give account of every idle word ; and if for the idle words, how much more for the words that stain and injure, or fall as a destructive blight into other hearts and lives ! When we give ourselves to Christ, we ought to give Him our tongues. J. R. M.

22. Of course a *good wife* is meant. This is a blessing which God gives. (See 19 : 14 ; 31 : 10.) M. S.—It seems safe to conclude that he meant to indorse marriage as a Divine institution and a source of blessings to the husband whose concern it is to find a wife. Let him always regard a wife found as a favor obtained from the Lord. Some degree of mutual adaptation to each other in age and character are essential to the very purposes of married life, and may therefore be considered as necessarily implied in the idea of a wife. H. C.—He that finds a helpmeet for him—that is, a wife in the original acceptation of the word, that sought such a one with care and prayer, and has found what he sought, he has found a *good thing*, he has found that which will not only contribute

more than anything to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven. H.

23. Such is the usual fact ; specially is the first part of the verse usually true, because the necessities of the poor force them to beg. The second also is by far too often true. M. S.

24. The true meaning is, *A man of many companions is so to his own destruction*, but there is a friend (the true, loving friend) that sticks closer than a brother. The teacher warns us against mistaking the counterfeit for the true treasure. It is not the multitude of so-called friends that helps us. They may only embarrass and perplex. What we prize is the one whose love is stronger and purer even than all ties of kindred. E. H. P.—It is somewhat as if we should say in our tongue, A man of [too many] companions will be companionized ; or rather (for the sense) *victimized*. Comparing the first clause with the second, the original uses a very different word for “friend.” The first (“he that hath *friends*”) may be a hale fellow, a free associate to live upon you, to eat up at once your time, your morals, and your estate ; but the second (“there is a *friend*”) is the *loving* friend who is bound to you by ties of pure and strong affection. The sentiment seems to be that too many loose associates will work your ruin ; but one truly affectionate friend is worth more than a brother. H. C.

“There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,” is a *general* proverbial assertion that the tie of friendship may be and sometimes is stronger than that of nature ; that the attachment which binds two souls of kindred sentiments, tempers, and sympathies, may be and sometimes is closer, firmer, more endearing and enduring, than that which subsists by virtue of a mere natural relationship. B.

There is an inevitable space between us and our best friends in this world. We all need to have a friend who can keep nearer us and understand us better, stand by us more faithfully and help us more effectually, than any human being. And Christ is such a friend. Think of His power—His power to help and protect, in work, in danger, in temptation. Think of His sympathy—He can feel for us, He can understand us, and all we are feeling and going through. His might to help us is as of one raised like the stars above us ; His understanding of us is nearer than that of one who sits by the same fireside. This best Friend will never disappoint us, as those we thought our good friends here sometimes do. This best Friend is always near. This Friend is never estranged.

He will never die. There is no shadow of coming parting to hang, unspoken of, but oftentimes silently remembered, over our communion with Him. *A. K. H. Boyd.*

What Christ *was, He is.* The centuries of time, which have been as an imperceptible instant to Him, have produced no change in His friendship, have not abated in the least His faithful affection, His exhaustless sympathies. His absence in body has not impaired or affected His power and willingness to befriend the trusting soul—to minister guidance, strength, comfort, and sanctification, in all its circumstances of darkness, temptation, grief, or sin. It is Jesus, the *Friend of sinners*, that still extends to us the offices of friendship. It is He that guides, girds, soothes, cheers, and charms our blinded, tempted, wounded, wearied spirits in the narrow pathway to heaven. And it is He that still mercifully confronts us while traversing the broad way to destruction, that still waits, knocking at the door of our hearts, that beseeches us to come unto Him that we may have life, that pleads as from the cross for our forgiveness when in our continued waywardness and guilt we know not what we do. Yes! in all these modes of His kindly interposition with us, whether we are pursuing the path to eternal life or death, Jesus is now proving Himself to be “a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” *B.*

About all our other friendships there are some easily reached and sorely felt limitations. There is a lack of knowledge in them, and we suffer from our friend's ignorance. There is a lack of sensibility; and what the tongue of one speaks with no thought of injury stings or crushes the spirit of another. There is a lack of patience; and affection itself, because it is human, neither beareth all things nor rises to the magnanimity of thinking no evil. There is a lack of strength or of skill; and the friend who has all the willingness and the desire to help us fails just at the point where help is most needed, or, with honest goodwill, blunders into the plan that brings damage and distress. There is a limit to physical capacity, to health, to endurance, to life; and so, in the midst of the most gracious and blessed ministrations to sympathy, the ready foot falters, the eager hand droops, the loving eye is closed, and the faithful watcher falls asleep. Turn to the One Friend. His friendship never fails or disappoints for lack of knowledge. It never fails or disappoints for want of patience; for among all the millions of inconstant and unthankful souls that He has permitted to call themselves His friends, there is not

one but has wounded Him in some committed wrong or omitted remembrance; and yet what one has He shaken off or given up, from the Peter that denied Him at the judgment hall to the innumerable Peters that denied Him last week in the face of fashion or mammon? It never fails or disappoints for want of skill, or strength, or endurance. How could it, seeing that it carries in its hand the very wisdom and power of God, puts all enemies under its feet, and having loved its own loves them unto the end? This is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He loves us before we love Him. He is the Friend whose affection waits for no preference, or overture, or conciliatory obedience, that it may begin its wonders of grace; for it is while we are yet sinners that He dies for us. He loves us for no beauty, because to those eyes that had been used to look, before He left His glory to come seeking us, on the beauty of heaven, there could be no loveliness in us to see. Beginning thus, His love only grows with its own sacrifices. *F. D. H.*

The peculiarity of Christianity is the strong personal tie of real love and intimacy which will bind men to the end of time to this Man that died nineteen hundred years ago. We look back into the wastes of antiquity; the mighty names rise there that we reverence; there are great teachers from whom we have learned and to whom, after a fashion, we are grateful. But what a gulf there is between us and the best and the noblest of them! But here is a dead Man, who to-day is the object of passionate attachment and a love deeper than life to millions of people, and will be to the end of time. There is nothing in the whole history of the world the least like that strange bond which ties you and me to Jesus Christ, and the paradox of the apostle remains a unique fact in the experience of humanity. “Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, ye love.” We stretch out our hands across the waste, silent centuries, and there we touch the warm, throbbing heart of our Friend, who lives forever and forever is near us. We here, nearly two millenniums after the words fell on the nightly air on the road to Gethsemane, have them coming direct to our hearts. A perpetual bond unites men with Christ to-day; and for us, as truly as in that long-past Paschal night, is it true, “Ye are My friends.” There are no limitations in that friendship, no misconstructions in that heart, no alienation possible, no change to be feared. There is absolute rest for us there. Why should I be solitary if Jesus Christ is my Friend? Why should I fear if He walks by my side?

Why should anything be burdensome if He lays it upon me and helps me to bear it? What is there in life that cannot be faced and borne—

ay, and conquered—if we have Him, as we all may have Him, for the Friend and the home of our hearts. A. M.

CHAPTER XIX.

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| <p>1 BETTER is the poor that walketh in his integrity
Than he that is perverse in his lips and is a fool.</p> <p>2 Also, that the soul be without knowledge is not good ;
And he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.</p> <p>3 The foolishness of man subverteth his way ;
And his heart fretteth against the LORD.</p> <p>4 Wealth addeth many friends :
But the poor is separated from his friend.</p> <p>5 A false witness shall not be unpunished ;
And he that uttereth lies shall not escape.</p> <p>6 Many will intreat the favour of the liberal man :
And every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.</p> <p>7 All the brethren of the poor do hate him :
How much more do his friends go far from him !
He pursueth <i>them with</i> words, <i>but</i> they are gone.</p> <p>8 He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul :
He that keepeth understanding shall find good.</p> <p>9 A false witness shall not be unpunished ;
And he that uttereth lies shall perish.</p> <p>10 Delicate living is not seemly for a fool ;
Much less for a servant to have rule over princes.</p> <p>11 The discretion of a man maketh him slow to anger ;
And it is his glory to pass over a transgression.</p> <p>12 The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion ;
But his favour is as dew upon the grass.</p> <p>13 A foolish son is the calamity of his father :
And the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.</p> <p>14 House and riches are an inheritance from fathers :
But a prudent wife is from the LORD.</p> | <p>15 Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep ;
And the idle soul shall suffer hunger.</p> <p>16 He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his soul :
<i>But</i> he that is careless of his ways shall die.</p> <p>17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD,
And his good deed will he pay him again.</p> <p>18 Chasten thy son, seeing there is hope ;
And set not thy heart on his destruction.</p> <p>19 A man of great wrath shall bear the penalty :
For if thou deliver <i>him</i>, thou must do it yet again.</p> <p>20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction,
That thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.</p> <p>21 There are many devices in a man's heart ;
But the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.</p> <p>22 The desire of a man is <i>the measure of</i> his kindness :
And a poor man is better than a liar.</p> <p>23 The fear of the LORD <i>tendeth</i> to life :
And he <i>that hath it</i> shall abide satisfied ;
He shall not be visited with evil.</p> <p>24 The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish,
And will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.</p> <p>25 Smite a scorner, and the simple will learn prudence :
And reprove one that hath understanding,
<i>and</i> he will understand knowledge.</p> <p>26 He that despoileth his father, and chaseth away his mother,
Is a son that causeth shame and bringeth reproach.</p> <p>27 Cease, my son, to hear instruction
<i>Only</i> to err from the words of knowledge.</p> <p>28 A worthless witness mocketh at judgment :
And the mouth of the wicked swalloweth iniquity.</p> <p>29 Judgments are prepared for scorners,
And stripes for the back of fools.</p> |
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2. KNOWLEDGE, in the first clause, opposed to hasting with the feet in the second, implies the practical use of knowledge, *i.e.*, discretion, forethought, wisdom. It is not good that the soul be void of such knowledge. The word for "sinneth" means etymologically to miss the

mark ; to make a misstep and get a fall—the natural consequence of too much haste with the feet. H. C.

The understanding is the pilot and guide of the whole man ; that faculty which sits at the stern of the soul, but as the most expert guide may mistake in the dark, so may the understanding when it wants the light of knowledge. “Without knowledge the mind cannot be good,” nor the life good, nor the external condition safe. “My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4: 6). *Westminster Divines*.—Knowledge expands the mind, exalts the faculties, refines the taste of pleasure, and opens numerous sources of intellectual enjoyment. By means of it we become less dependent for satisfaction upon the sensitive appetites, the pleasures of sense are more easily despised, and we are made to feel the superiority of the spiritual to the material part of our nature. R. Hall.

3. The ruin which the man brings on himself by his own folly he will angrily charge upon his Maker. This occurs even now too often for us to call in question the truthfulness of the proverb. M. S.—The sinner destroys himself by his own wilful and obstinate folly, and then he accuses God, as if He were the cause of his misery ; although God hath done everything to save him which could have been done by the righteous Lawgiver and Governor of the world. R. W.

8. They that take pains to *get wisdom*, to get knowledge and grace and acquaintance with God, show that they *love their own souls*. And to those that take care to keep it when they have got it, it is health, wealth, and honor to the soul, and therefore he that *keeps understanding*, as he shows that he *loves his own soul*, so he shall certainly *find good*, all good. H.

11. The thoroughly wise man will be long-suffering, slow to anger, keeping his passions under vigorous self-control. It is his glory to overlook and forgive offences. H. C.—Men think it is a disgrace ; as if clemency did argue a man void of courage or spirit. But in the judgment of the *Word*, clemency is your honor, and there is more generosity in pardon than in revenge. “As the elect of God put on mercies ;” *that* is a good garment for a Christian. T. M.

Revenge is a kind of wild justice. In taking revenge a man is but even with his enemy ; but in passing it over he is superior ; for it is a prince’s part to pardon, and Solomon saith, “It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence.” Bacon.—Although it may be hard

to bear down the selfish and resentful feelings of our nature, the true dignity that is attained by doing so should stimulate every generous mind not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. *Bishop Butler*.—Generous and magnanimous minds are readiest to forgive, and it is a weakness and impotency of mind to be unable to forgive. *Bacon*.

He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself ; for every man has need to be forgiven. *Lord Herbert*.—This is the noblest victory, and to excite us to aspire after it we have the highest example. God is our pattern in love and compassions ; we are well warranted to endeavor to be like Him in this. *Leighton*.—This is the true valor of a Christian when he can overrule his own nature drawing him to revenge, return benefits for injuries, and overcome evil with goodness according to the example of our heavenly Father. Then he shows his fortitude and triumphs over his spiritual enemies, when he vanquishes without striking, and though unarmed of all offensive weapons doth courageously march into the field, having nothing in his hand but the shield of patience, and by bearing the blows gets the greater victory. *Downname*.

Write thy wrongs in ashes. Draw the curtain of night upon injuries, shut them up in a tower of oblivion, and let them be as though they had not been. To forgive our enemies, yet hope that God will punish them, is not to forgive enough. To forgive them ourselves, and not to pray God to forgive them, is a partial act of charity. Forgive thine enemies totally and without any reserve that God will avenge thee. *T. Browne*.—It is no forgiveness when you say, “I forgive, but I can never forget.” It is the unforgiving spirit that says that. It may be true that you never can forget ; but if you are really, heartily, wholly forgiving, you will not remember that you are never going to forget. Still less will you wish to say that you are never going to forget. Least of all will you feel like saying so in the spirit which such a form of words almost necessarily implies. *Anon*.—We *may* make the best of one another. We may forgive, even as we hope to be forgiven. We may put ourselves in the place of others and ask what we should wish to be done to us, and thought of us, were we in their place. By fixing our attention on their good qualities, we shall rise to their level as surely as, by fixing our attention on their bad qualities, we shall sink below their level. By loving whatever is lovable in those

around us love will flow back from them to us, and life will become a pleasure instead of a pain, and earth will become like heaven. A. P. S.

14. A discreet and virtuous wife is a choice gift of God's providence to a man; a wife that is *prudent*, in opposition to one that is contentious (v. 13). It is a more valuable gift than *house and riches*, contributes more to the comfort and credit of a man's life and the welfare of his family, is a greater token of God's favor. H.—“Prudent” is here in the sense of wise, intelligent to apprehend the responsibilities of her position and true to her duty. While houses and lands come down from fathers to sons, such a wife comes from the Lord. He provides this choicest of social blessings for the good of the race through well-ordered families. Those who believe this and have faith in God's universal providence will, of course, see the fitness of asking such a blessing from the Lord, and, when received, of recognizing it through all their life as a gift from His hand. H. C.

15. The idle man is never a happy man! His thoughts, unemployed in *doing*, pour out their ceaseless currents in wishing. They create, from sheer loss of something to do, ideal wants and deficiencies, which, when supplied, bring no rest, because they were not real. The way to keep off depression, to banish vain cravings, for which there is nowhere any portion, is to buckle on the harness of exacting and beneficent work. We are happiest when busiest if busy in useful labor. *Stone*.

17. Sir Thomas More, a famous Lord Chancellor of England, used always to say, “There was more rhetoric,” more persuasive argument, “in this little sentence than in a whole library.” *Bishop Horne*.—Familiar as the words are, we almost lose sight of the original greatness of the thought. We give to the poor. Have we lost our gift? No, what we gave we have. We have lent to One who will repay with usury. Underlying this, again, is the yet nobler truth of our Lord's teaching (Matt. 25 : 40). He identifies Himself with all sufferers. In giving to them we have done it also unto Him. E. H. P.

It is assumed here that this pity of the poor does not expend itself in mere emotion, but yields the genuine fruits of substantial help according to our ability and their need. He who gives to the poor in the spirit of such true pity virtually lends to the Lord upon the Lord's promise to repay in His own due and best time. The Hebrew has it, His recompense the Lord will make good to him. What an investment

this must be! Do we believe in the plighted word of the Most High? Have we confidence in His resources to pay and in His wisdom to make the payment in the best possible time and manner? If so, then here is an opportunity for investing which ought to be regarded as amply secure and eminently satisfactory. H. C. —God has not left alms-giving free to our choice, that we should plume ourselves upon our trifling charities, as though they were the free gifts of our liberality. The freedom of the Gospel is freedom from sin, not from duty; it is a free service that we may serve freely. He lays down no measure for us, that giving, as did the early Christians, “to their power, yea, and beyond their power,” we might imitate in some measure the measureless love of our God for us. But the law of mercy itself is as absolute a law as any of the commandments given on Mount Sinai. It is the soul of all the commandments of the second table. *Pusey*.

Just as the smallest, the feeblest, the poorest, the most ignorant, the most miserable, received in the name of Christ, brings with him Christ and God Himself, to him who thus receives him, so the most insignificant work done in that name—that is to say, with the heart full of what Christ has been and what Christ has done for us—assumes in the eyes of God an infinite value. The cup of cold water, given in that name, is the emblem of all those hidden good deeds which are nothing in the eyes of men, but which are of infinite worth in the eyes of God, which the feeblest can accomplish in their feebleness, the poorest in their poverty. The value of an action, in the Divine estimate, depends not on what we do, but on the spirit in which we do it. How some deeds glorified by the public voice, some magnificent gifts, lauded to the skies, will be consumed as stubble and as chaff, in the day when the judgment of the Holy Spirit shall be accomplished; while the widow's mite, the bit of bread given in love, the word of consolation springing from a pitying heart, and which no one has repeated, the prayer of intercession heard by God alone, will shine like gold, silver, precious pearls in that great day of the final judgment! *Godet*.

He that lays out for God, God lays up for him. But, alas! God's credit runs low in the world; few care to trust Him. Give and spend, and be sure that God will send: for only in giving and spending do you fulfil the object of His sending. *J. G. Holland*.—You want to double your wealth without gambling or stock-jobbing. Share it. Whether it be material or

intellectual, its rapid increase will amaze you. What would the sun have been had he folded himself up in darkness? Surely he would have gone out. *J. C. Hare.*

Careless, indiscriminate alms-giving encourages idleness and improvidence and also imposture. If you give freely to ragged and filthy street beggars, you are in fact *hiring* people to dress themselves in filthy rags and go about begging with fictitious tales of distress. If, on the contrary, you carefully inquire for and relieve honest and industrious persons who have fallen into distress through unavoidable misfortune, you are not only doing good to those objects, but also holding out an encouragement generally to honest industry. *Whately.*

20. It is well with those that are *wise in their latter end*, wise for their future state, that are found wise when their latter end comes; wise virgins, wise builders, wise stewards. Those that would *be wise in their latter end* must *hear counsel* and *receive instruction*, in their beginnings, must be willing to be taught and ruled, willing to be advised and reproofed, when they are young. *H.*

21. The meaning goes deeper than the trite parallel of "Man proposes, God disposes." Stress is laid on the *many* purposes of man, shifting, changing, from good to better, from bad to worse, and the one unchanging righteous "counsel" of Jehovah. *E. H. P.*—"A man's heart" is a little world, full of scheming and business. "*The devices of a man's heart,*" taken altogether, are his scheme for being happy. So the great collective whole of the "*devices*" of all hearts constitutes the grand complex scheme of the human race for their happiness. This vast, confused total of man's devices the Omniscient Searcher of hearts evermore looks upon. And while He sees every part and the whole, His single immense will, His one all-comprehending system of design, is co-extended with the entire breadth of the scene, confronting it at every point and, indeed, stretches away beyond it to infinity, like the sky expanded beyond our earth to other worlds. So that, to every device of all hearts, His "*counsel,*" His design exists parallel, whether in coincidence or opposition. In other words, respecting the object of every device He has *His* design, a fixed design, paramount to all designs and devices. *Foster.*

There is nothing better than that a man should live in the feeling that it is not his purpose, but the purpose of God that must stand sure. He may have plans and designs, indeed the business of life cannot well go on without

them; but he must know that God is not bound by his plans, and is under no obligation to bestow His prospering blessing upon them. God has a plan of His own for every one of us. If our plans agree with His, well, He may bless them; but if not, He will either make them promote the purpose which He intends and which we did not intend, or will try our faith by blasting our beloved plans altogether, that He may bless us in His own way, and lead us to safety, to usefulness, to blessedness, by paths that we know not of and by ways that never did enter or could enter our minds. Let us not, therefore, be discouraged if our plans do not answer to our minds, if everything turns wrong upon our hands. We know that He is not unkind, that He does not forget us; and we have reason to hope that He only brings our own small plans and devices to nought because He has something of His own—something larger, something far better—in store for us. How many are they to whom God has not spoken comfortably until He lured them into the wilderness, where the soul, withdrawn from amid the ruins of its broken plans and frustrated hopes, is alone with Him, sees Him alone, leans on Him only. *Kitto.*

22. His kindness. A "kind" person is a "kinned" person, one of kin; one who acknowledges his kinship with other men and acts upon it; confesses that he owes to them, as of one blood with himself, the debt of love. And so mankind is *mankinned*. Thus Hamlet does much more than merely play on words when he calls his father's brother, who had married his mother, "A little more than kin, and less than kind." Beautiful before, how much more beautiful do "kind" and "kindness" appear when we apprehend the root out of which they grow and the truth that they embody; that they are the acknowledgment in loving deeds of our kinship with our brethren; of the relationship which exists between all the members of the human family, and of the obligations growing out of this. *Trench.*

23. The fear of the Lord (true piety) is *unto life*; not only tends toward life, but surely works out this result. He shall pass the whole night satisfied—a beautiful way of saying that his peace of soul shall be constant. The visitations of judgment on the wicked shall not touch him. *H. C.*—Not in the increase of knowledge merely, not in any mere mastery of human arts and sciences, is the secret of the deeper and truer life to be found. It is true that all human culture, rightly used, tends to deepen and broaden the life, to make thought more direct:

and intense, to give a finer tone to the nerves, and a keener sensitiveness to the feelings. But it is only when human culture is made subordinate to something higher that it becomes really effective in the way of deepening and broadening the real life. Where the fear of the Lord is the ruling principle in life—where this is joined to an earnest purpose, a deep enthusiasm, a broad capacity, an unwearying diligence—there are present the elements whereof true life is made. Where these are present, humanistic culture will be assimilated and wrought over into something higher; it will form part of the rich chord of life wherein all that is true finds somewhere its harmony. S. S. T.

24. The Orientals used no knife, fork, or spoon; only fingers. This sluggard is supposed to be hungry; but having plunged his hand all over (hiding it) in the dish, as if to economize labor to the utmost, he still finds himself too lazy to bring it back to his mouth again! This is strongly put—too lazy to eat! H. C.

25. Simple as the words are, they embrace nearly the whole theory of punishment. If the man who offends is a scorner, *sc.*, hardened beyond all hope of reformation, then punish him by way of retribution and example, and let the penalty be sharp, that even the unwary and careless may beware. If the man is still “understanding,” then let the punishment take the form of discipline. Admonish, reprove, educate. E. H. P.—Give the offender his

due praise as well as his deserved reproof; this will make reproof the more prevalent. The iron when heated red-hot is bent and beaten without breaking, which way the smith pleases. When I have heated him with the fire of commendation, I may then beat upon him with reproof in greater hopes of success. There is hardly any work of Christianity which requires more wisdom than this of admonition. The temper and quality of the persons, the nature and difference of the crimes, the manner and way of delivering the reproof, the fittest season for it, ought all to be seriously and diligently considered. *Swinnock.*

26. Strong precepts does the Old Testament everywhere exhibit against cruel and severe treatment of parents by their children. Even one out of the *ten commandments* is occupied with this subject. M. S.

28. Sin begets sin; yea, one sin begets numberless sins, and one violation of law and conscience leads to other violations, and these to more, till the fearful progression ends in open profligacy, insult to the Eternal King, and speedy destruction. No one knows when initiated into some lower degree of Satan’s lodge whether he may not penetrate to the highest. This makes it dangerous to parley with temptation. Judicial blindness befalls those who voluntarily put out the light of education and conscience. One sin, in God’s awful judgment, becomes the punishment of another. J. W. A.

CHAPTER XX.

- 1 WINE is a mocker, strong drink a brawler;
And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise.
- 2 The terror of a king is as the roaring of a lion;
He that provoketh him to anger sinneth
against his own life.
- 3 It is an honour for a man to keep aloof from strife;
But every fool will be quarrelling.
- 4 The slothful will not plow by reason of the winter;
Therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing.
- 5 Counsel in the heart of man is *like* deep water;
But a man of understanding will draw it out.

- 6 Most men will proclaim every one his own kindness;
But a faithful man who can find?
- 7 A just man that walketh in his integrity,
Blessed are his children after him.
- 8 A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment
Scattereth away all evil with his eyes.
- 9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean,
I am pure from my sin?
- 10 Divers weights, and divers measures,
Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.
- 11 Even a child maketh himself known by his doings,
Whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

- 12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye,
The LORD hath made even both of them.
- 13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty ;
Open thine eyes, *and* thou shalt be satisfied
with bread.
- 14 It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer :
But when he is gone his way, then he boast-
eth.
- 15 There is gold, and abundance of rubies :
But the lips of knowledge are a precious
jewel.
- 16 Take his garment that is surety for a
stranger ;
And hold him in pledge *that is surety* for
strangers.
- 17 Bread of falsehood is sweet to a man ;
But afterwards his mouth shall be filled
with gravel.
- 18 Every purpose is established by counsel :
And by wise guidance make thou war.
- 19 He that goeth about as a talebearer reveal-
eth secrets :
Therefore meddle not with him that openeth
wide his lips.
- 20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother,
His lamp shall be put out in the blackest
darkness.
- 21 An inheritance *may be* gotten hastily at the
beginning ;
But the end thereof shall not be blessed.
- 22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil :
Wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.
- 23 Divers weights are an abomination to the
LORD ;
And a false balance is not good.
- 24 A man's goings are of the LORD ;
How then can man understand his way ?
- 25 It is a snare to a man rashly to say, *It is*
holy.
And after vows to make inquiry.
- 26 A wise king winnoweth the wicked,
And bringeth the *threshing* wheel over them.
- 27 The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD,
Searching all the innermost parts of the
belly.
- 28 Mercy and truth preserve the king :
And his throne is upholden by mercy.
- 29 The glory of young men is their strength :
And the beauty of old men is the hoary
head.
- 30 Stripes that wound cleanse away evil :
And strokes *reach* the innermost parts of
the belly.

1. No better description of wine was ever given than that of the inspired penman, that it is a "mockery." Its promises are false and its performances deceptive. Yet what remains more common than to hear people recommend as a "food" what contains in itself no more of the elements of nutrition than broken granite? Liebig demonstrated that all the nourishment to be found in two gallons of the best Bavarian beer could be taken up upon the point of his table-knife; and Carpenter showed that the strength gotten out of a man by wine was of exactly the same nature as the speed gotten out of a horse under the plunge of the spur. The only source of either animal heat or animal strength in a glass of wine or a bottle of beer is in the unfermented vegetable element that it contains. And this modicum is more than neutralized by the alcohol which gives it its fascination. It should be understood that the one imperative requisite for health is in an even and natural flow of the blood through the channels of circulation. It should then be remembered that the first effect of alcohol, received into the system through the stomach, is to derange this flow. Controlled as the circulation is by a delicate system of vaso-motor nerves which open and close automatically the valves of the vessels, whatever affects these valves

must of necessity change the nature of the circulation. The slightest observation will convince any one that the first effect of alcohol is to partially paralyze this system, and render the nerves slow and irregular in the response to the necessities of their function. The quickened pulse, the flushed face, the tingling extremities show that the heart is doing double duty, and the blood is, despite its instinctive efforts to keep the circulation uniform, thrown in a great sheet toward the surface, and more or less retained in the engorged vessels of the cuticle. When we note by finger tip and watch that the action of the heart has been increased from two to four beats a minute, we can easily estimate the increased labor which is laid upon this sensitive and vital organ by the action of wine. If we ask any engineer what would be the effect of lightening the weight upon the governor of his engine or shortening the stroke of its piston, he would promptly tell us that it must increase its speed and wear out the machinery with proportionate rapidity. Such is the action of alcohol upon the living organism of the human frame. The heart of even a moderate drinker, like the heart of one afflicted by valvular disease, does double duty and suffers in consequence.

One of the phenomena which sorely puzzled

early Arctic explorers was that under the power of grog they were less sensible of cold, but more quickly succumbed to its effects. The studies of the physician soon made it plain that the nerves of sensation being partially benumbed, men could not realize the cold; while the nerves of automatic play being also affected, the blood was thrown to the surface to lose its animal heat by rapid radiation, and death was the result. Another of the deceits of strong drink is in the counterfeit of strength which it presents in its victim. Nothing is more common than great mental excitement existing side by side with decreased physical power; and the most common of all results, in such a crisis, is the final prostration and complete collapse of the one thus affected. Nervous excitement is a close counterfeit of muscular power, but is, in truth, its very antipodes. The experiments of the physiologist with innumerable living creatures shows most conclusively that the body is weakened by alcohol just as surely as the brain is unnaturally excited. *Interior.*

What is called "strong drink" was made, according to various ancient authorities, from wheat, from barley, dates, and other fruits, or from honey, and was sometimes mixed with spices to make it more intoxicating. It seems not to have been called by our translators "strong" relatively to wine, but to other common drinks. Like wine it was intoxicating. The thing affirmed here is that wine robs a man of his sense of propriety, and makes him abusive and insulting to others. Strong drink makes him boisterous, noisy, sometimes raging like a madman. The use of either wine or strong drink will shut off all hope of attaining true wisdom. For this acquisition, a calm, self-poised, considerate state of mind is indispensable. The maddening power of strong drink is fatal. H. C.

When the wine is in, the wit is out, and then the man, according as his natural temper is, either mocks like a fool or rages like a madman. Drunkenness, which pretends to be a sociable thing, renders men unfit for society, for it makes them abusive with their tongues and outrageous in their passions. H. — Strong drink demoralizes and debauches the character, weakens the moral principles, strengthens the corrupt propensities, and excites the wicked passions. It opens new avenues to temptation, exposes its victims to the worst influences, and counteracts those which are good. To seek happiness in the immoderate use of wine is as if one should build huge fires in his dwelling on a hot, sultry day in midsummer; or rather

as if he should set fire to his house in the dead of winter, and think to find a comfortable protection for himself and children beneath the leafless hedge. He kindles the fires of passion which must consume his comforts, and sooner or later, unless extinguished, consume both his body and his soul. J. M. M.

The day was when that wreck of honesty and manly strength, that sad ruin of grace and womanly beauty, was filled with sorrow and remorse; but these feelings became more and more enfeebled, while drinking habits, fed by every new indulgence, increased in strength, making reformation less hopeful by every day's delay. And now, like a boat swept on in a foaming rapid, which neither oar nor arm can stem, with all the dread consequences full in sight, a ruined character, a beggared family, his body descending into an untimely grave, his soul to the doom of these awful words, "No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven," he yields to a torrent that sweeps means, character, wife, children, body, and soul into one common ruin. *Guthrie.* — There is no hope that it should ever change. The waters have gone over me. But out of the black depths, could I be heard, I would cry out to all those who have but set a foot in the perilous flood. Could the youth, to whom the flavor of his first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of life, or the entering upon some newly-discovered paradise, look into my desolation, and be made to understand what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will; to see his destruction and have no power to stop it, and yet to feel it all the way emanating from himself; to perceive all goodness emptied out of him, and yet not to be able to forget a time when it was otherwise; to bear about the piteous spectacle of his own self-ruin; could he feel the body of the death, out of which I cry hourly with feebler and feebler outcry to be delivered, it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth in all the pride of its mantling temptation. *Charles Lamb.*

Surely the testimony of medical experts ought forever to settle the question that moderate drinking is not safe. *No man knows or can know when he keeps within the limits of moderation.* The results of long experience demonstrate that moderation never has and never can fight intemperance successfully. The results of scientific experiments with alcohol have settled only one point—viz., *the soundness of the principle of abstinence.* And whatever the

differences between doctors and scientific men as to the smallest minimum poisonous dose or the largest maximum safe dose, *all their differences lie within a certain small circle at whose circumference they do meet* and are agreed, that even by the broadest estimate among them but very little alcohol is safe or even presumably beneficial. And with this on the one hand, we have, on other, the great realm of the nameless and indescribable totality of drunkenness, degradation, and misery. And since the use of alcohol is such a physiological problem even to scientific men, and since the consequences involved in them are so tremendous as we know them to be, and as Moxon points out in these impressive words: "*Alcohol affects the whole man, his whole self, all he can do or say, and not only so, but all that his bodily nature does in secret with him*"—surely the disagreement among accepted authorities cannot be held to warrant its use, but rather to impose the highest obligation to avoid it altogether. *Anon.*

5. *Deep waters* are difficult to be sounded. So a man's secret purpose or counsel it may be difficult to sound. Yet a man of skill will draw it out from its depths. *Drawing out* is a metaphorical expression occasioned by the preceding image—*deep waters*. *M. S.*

9. This must be explained to mean: Who can say this appropriately and truthfully, and perhaps with some emphasis on the word *I* as opposed to what God and His grace do for those who seek help of Him. He seems to speak of those who boastfully proclaim what they themselves have done. *H. C.*

10. Divers weights. Deception in weights and measures destroys and sweeps away all legitimate modes of dealing. If the laws of buying and selling are corrupted, human society is in a manner dissolved; so that he who cheats by false weights and measures, differs little from him who utters false coin; and consequently one who as buyer or seller has falsified the standard measures of wine or corn or anything else, is accounted criminal. *Calvin.*—This branch of social morality requires the strictest attention from the Lord's people. It is here that continual contact goes on between them and the world. Nothing injures religion so much as the mercantile immoralities of its professors. Fraudulent bankrupts, dishonest tradings, overreachings—these are what go to lessen the influence of religion among men. *Edgar.*

As certainly as what is contemptible carries contempt, the man who is willing to sell his integrity with his goods will appear to be just

the character he is. Undeviating adherence to truth and justice may possibly lose to-day's customer, but in the long run it will bring as many more as it is more implicitly trusted. *H. B.*—Ordinary trade is a splendid field for the practical exercise of religious virtues, because the commercial activities of the age afford large facilities either for fidelity or for fraud. In every office and warehouse religion claims to set up her throne. In the smallest act of buying and selling she insists on having a voice. Not only on the portal of every church, but on the forefront of every shop—ay, on the beam of every balance, we ought to see the inscription, "To the glory of God alone!" *D. D.*

11. By his doings the mere child will show not only what he is now but what he will become in after life. Hence the importance of studying his developments of character closely at the earliest possible period, that you may forecast his future and guard in season against evils which, neglected, will become incurable. *H. C.*—The graces or the faults of children are not trifles, as they are often deemed to be. "The child is father of the man;" and the earliest actions are prophecies of the future, whether it will be pure and right, or unclean and evil.

12. More is meant than meets the ear. It is not merely that we owe the gifts of sight and hearing to Jehovah, but that He, being the Giver, will also call us to account for them. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" *E. H. P.*—That God made the ear and the eye is affirmed for the sake of this inference—viz., that he must therefore himself have a perfect ear and eye to discern all human deeds and even thoughts. *H. C.*

14. It is nought, saith the buyer—that is, the buyer tries to overreach the seller by disparaging his goods; but when he has obtained them at his own price, he boasts of having tricked him. *Wells.*—Thus the arts of trade and the spirit of the sharper were the same in the age of Solomon as in our own. Human selfishness makes no progress (morally) in the ways of business with the lapse of ages. *H. C.*—What the proverb means to expose and censure is, consciously unjust depreciation of an article in order to secure it for less than the buyer believes it to be worth. This may be done in two ways: First, by the actual depreciation of the thing itself, either as to material or workmanship or both; the man knowing well enough that in each respect it is alike good. Or, secondly, by the man's pretending

that he does not want it and has no use for it, so that whatever may be its intrinsic value it is not really of that value to him ; he, on the contrary, knowing and feeling that it would just suit him, and secretly wishing to obtain it if possible. All this is, of course, wrong. The case, however, is much worse when the buyer knows or suspects that the seller must sell ; that he is poor or in difficulties, and that his circumstances may be taken advantage of to wring from him his goods at a cruel sacrifice. A man's heart may be broken as well as his position destroyed by such heartless pressure being brought to bear upon him in a great necessity. T. B.

What, it may be asked, is the very operation of merchandising but a drill exercise in selfishness ? And what is the law of price or profit but the law of possibility—viz., to ask the highest price the market will bear, be the cost what it may or the value what it may. What, too, is current price itself but a market graduation, settled by the contrary bulling and bearing of two selfishnesses, that of the sellers and that of the buyers ? And then what is the trader doing but feeling after all the while, and having it even for his life to wait on the adjustments of selfishness, even as barometers wait on the air-waves and their fluctuating levels ? which waiting always on the unsteady, unsteadies even the sense of principle. Besides the very working of a bargain, what is it but an adroit wrestling match ; a talking up of the market and the goods perhaps on one side and a talking down on the other, or a magnifying by shrewd silences that is even more cunningly and skilfully insincere ? *Bushnell*.

He who freely praises what he means to purchase, and he who enumerates the faults of what he means to sell, may set up a partnership with honesty. *Lavater*.

17. "To eat gravel" was a Hebrew and is an Arabic phrase for getting into trouble. Like this, in the long run, is the "bread" got by deceit, which tastes sweet at first, but ends by leaving the hunger of the soul unsatisfied. The general sense of the verse recognizes the fact that there is a pleasure in the sense of cleverness felt after a hard bargain or a successful fraud, and meets it by bidding men look on the after consequences. E. H. P.—So universally, though the first taste of sinful enjoyment may be sweet, it will be bitterness in the latter end. H. C.

19. Talebearers are commonly flatterers, and by speaking fair insinuate themselves into men's acquaintance. Those are unprincipled

people that go about carrying stories, that make mischief among neighbors and relations, that reveal secrets which they are intrusted with, or which by unfair means they come to the knowledge of ; or under pretence of guessing at men's thoughts and intentions tell that of them which is really false. "Be not familiar with such, do not give them the hearing when they tell their tales and reveal secrets, for you may be sure that they will betray your secrets too and tell tales of you." H.

20. By a figure at once truly beautiful and terribly forcible, this flagrant sin against one's father and mother is threatened with the most appalling punishment. That the lamp of one's life—the only means for one ray of light and joy—shall be extinguished in the very depths of darkness, leaves this miserable victim the wreck of ruin and despair. God will never lack the requisite agencies to punish this most unnatural sin. H. C.

22. Say not thou, I will recompense. Take not revenge for an injury received where thou art not the proper judge, but leave thy cause to the Lord and expect His righteous sentence. *Bishop Patrick*.—We must not avenge ourselves, no, nor so much as think of it or design it. "*Say not thou, no not in thy heart, I will recompense evil for evil ; do not please thyself with the thought that some time or other thou shalt have an opportunity of being quits with him. Do not wish revenge or hope for it, much less resolve upon it, no, not when the injury is fresh, and the resentments of it most deep. Never say that thou wilt do a thing which thou canst not in faith pray to God to assist thee in, and that thou canst not do in meditating revenge.*" We must refer ourselves to God and leave it to Him to plead our cause, to maintain our right, and reckon with those that do us wrong in such a way and manner as He thinks fit and in His own due time. *Wait on the Lord*, attend His pleasure, acquiesce in His will, and He does not say that He shall punish him that has injured thee ; instead of desiring that, thou must forgive him and pray for him, but *He shall save thee*, and that is enough. H.

If this precept were obeyed by half the living world, these obedient ones would have little violence to fear from the other half ; there would be a vast diminution in the wrongs inflicted by man upon his fellows. Those who thus committed all vengeance to God would have a most precious experience of His friendship and love ; would find their hearts drawn exceedingly near to Him as to an ever-present.

friend and preserver, and would have a double joy in the victory gained over one of the most dangerous passions of the depraved heart.

II. C. —Men cannot injure us except so far as they exasperate us to forget ourselves. No man is really dishonored except by his own act. Calumny, injustice, ingratitude—the only harm these can do us is by making us bitter, or rancorous, or gloomy, by shutting our hearts or souring our affections. We rob them of their power if they only leave us more sweet and forgiving than before. And this is the only true victory. We win by love. Love transmutes all curses and forces them to rain down in blessings. Our enemies become unconsciously our best friends when their slanders deepen in us heavenlier graces. Let them do their worst; they only give us the Godlike victory of forgiving them. F. W. R.

23. Swinging in the air before our eyes this tangible type represents the law and duty of justice with singular accuracy and beauty. A pair of scales is the symbol of mutuality, or reciprocity, between man and man. Each side or cup of the scales, with its contents, owes its position not to any natural value or independent force it has in itself, but to what there is on the opposite side of the support. The true position, when both rest after their vibration, is that when the opposite weights are equal. These are the mutual rights of men. The standard, supporting the whole, firm and fixed, represents the upholding hand of God, keeping just men and unjust men, for the time, alike, while it tries and proves them what manner of men they are and how they turn. Almost all our life is implicated in some social relation, and in all the enlarging series of circles—the family, the school, the neighborhood, the sphere of public business, the nation—that balancing of mutual rights, with all its delicate exposures and dangers, its sources of sin, and pain, and meanness, and moral victory and glory, is going on. Hence is the solemn necessity and the religious sanctity of justice—such justice as only Christ teaches and the Christian learns. And because of all these various kinds of commerce, the commerce of material things, in property and merchandise, stands as a kind of representative and illustration, so the scales have become the recognized symbol of commercial honesty. The “false balance” is the special falsehood of commerce, but it is the emblem of all injustice. On the one side something is given or taken for which there is no offset on the other. And yet, observe there *seems* to be an offset. The scales hang even to the eye. But some-

thing which is not the just weight is put in to look as if it were, to satisfy appearances by a deception. The buyer gets something for which he paid nothing; or the seller is paid something for which he delivers nothing. F. D. H.

24. God guides the steps of man, *i.e.*, He chooses and arranges for him his path. Man cannot know or determine with certainty his own way, since all is dependent on God. M. S. —Our enterprises succeed, not as we desire and design, but as God directs and disposes. The goings even of a strong man, so the word signifies, *are of the Lord*, for his strength is weakness without God, nor is the battle always to the strong. We have no foresight of future events and therefore know not how to forecast for them. We so little understand our own way that we know not what is good for ourselves, and therefore we must make a virtue of necessity, and commit our way unto the Lord in whose hand it is, follow the guidance and submit to the disposal of Providence. H.

The finite, dependent being is preserved in a sense of his dependence by realizing that he is not his own master, that he cannot foresee or secure his own way, that confidence in himself as the guardian of his own interests is presumptuous. The uncertainties of our lives, our ignorance, our weakness, suggest the feeling of our dependence, and the sense of our dependence is a prime essential of piety. So, too, our ignorance of the future is an aid to *faith* also. We trust where we do not know. We rely on character because it is a security, and because we cannot foresee events. The character of God is a guarantee for that which shall come to pass. But why, one may ask, should a finite mind, ignorant of the future, trust rather than distrust, believe rather than doubt? Without question, our ignorance opens the door both to faith and to the want of it, and just here lies the trial of our characters. But when our dependence on a Supreme power is felt, when the fact is admitted that God has plans running through every life and all history, then faith, and not distrust, is natural, for such plans are good, they cannot fail; he who is in harmony with them shall prosper, and God will protect his interests. T. D. W.

25. The sentiment is that a man is ensnared by making a vow without reflection, and postponing till after his vow the inquiry whether he can perform it or whether it is admissible to disregard it (see Eccl. 5 : 4, 5). H. C.

27. The higher life, above that which he has in common with lower animals, comes to him

direct from God. Such a life, with all its powers of insight, consciousness, reflection, is as a lamp which God has lighted, throwing its rays into the darkest recesses of the heart. We are here half-way to the higher truth proclaimed in the prologue of John's Gospel. The candle, or lamp of Jehovah, derives its light from "the Light that lighteth every man," from the Eternal Word. E. H. P.

The soul is a principle of light to guide and direct man in all his motions, enabling him to reflect not only on his own actions, but on his most secret thoughts, and to discover the good or evil which is in them. *Wells*.—The soul of man, considered as having the power of turning its searching eye inward and taking cognizance of its own moral states and acts, is here beautifully compared to the lamp of the Lord, going down into the secret chambers of the inner man to search out the dark things there. See in this reflexive power one of the noblest features of man's God-like nature. He can and may know himself, and therefore may prosecute the noble work of self-correction and self-culture. H. C.

We have here the dignity of the soul, the great soul of man, that light which lighteth every man. It is a Divine light; it is the *candle of the Lord*, a candle of His lighting, for it is *the inspiration of the Almighty that gives us understanding*. He forms the spirit of man within him. It is after the image of God that man is created in knowledge. Conscience, that noble faculty, is God's deputy in the soul; it is a candle not only lighted *by* Him, but lighted *for* him. The Father of spirits is therefore called the *Father of lights*. It is a discovering light. By the help of reason we come to know men, to judge of their characters and dive into their designs; by the help of conscience we come to know ourselves. The spirit of a man has a self consciousness (1 Cor. 2 : 11), it searches into the dispositions and affections of the soul, praises what is good, condemns what is otherwise, and judges of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is the office, this the power of conscience, which we are therefore concerned to get rightly informed and keep void of offence. H.

Man belongs to two worlds: the *carnal* and the *spiritual*, a higher and a lower; and his great danger is, lest the lower nature may too much engross him, and his efforts to gratify it may swamp the needs and the feebler demands of the higher. It is then to enable him to pay due attention to his spiritual nature that man's Creator has implanted within him this faculty

of *conscience*, to remind him continually of the great things concerning himself, concerning God, and concerning eternity. Conscience is, therefore, the sentinel which God has placed within man, to watch over and protect from harm his moral and spiritual well-being. It does not act with the same power in all persons; nor, in the same person, does it always act in the same degree; it is capable of being *hardened, seared, and deadened*; and as such its admonitions will be comparatively slight, unless roused up and awakened. But, less or more in every one, it is man's universal and perpetual reminder that he has a spiritual nature which demands watchfulness and care, training and development; and which will in the last great day leave all men "without excuse," inasmuch as having it in them, as a law unto themselves, they heeded it not, and lived lives of carnal gratification only—while their souls were entirely neglected, gradually deteriorating through neglect, until they died an everlasting death—a death of moral and spiritual suicide. *Martensen*.

Conscience is *not* in itself a sure and safe instructor as to the path of duty. God has *not* implanted in every man's mind, by nature, a knowledge of God and a knowledge of God's law. *Such* knowledge comes by *revelation*, not by *conscience*. What we call "conscience" is a monitor rather than a teacher; it is that faculty or attribute of man which tells him that he ought to do right, although it does not tell him what right is; and again it reminds him that he has done wrong, when he purposely has done that which he supposed was wrong, or has failed to do that which he understood to be his duty. Hence it is true that, when a man acts against his conscience he is at fault, because so far as he knows he does wrong and his intention has been to be wrong. But, on the other hand, if a man does what his conscience approves, it does not follow that he is doing right. Many a man is serving the devil conscientiously. "To the law and to the testimony." *There* is the standard of right. Your duty is to do right as God commands the right; not merely as your conscience approves or dictates. It is your duty first to *know* what is right, and then to *do* what is right. You may think you are all right while yet you are all wrong. You may be walking by the light which is within you. "Take heed, . . . that the light which is in thee be not darkness." "If . . . the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." It is true that the Holy Spirit is promised to dwell in the be-

liever's heart ; but the Holy Spirit is to take of the things of Christ as they are disclosed in the revelation of Christ and to make them clear unto the disciple. He in whom the Holy Spirit dwells seeks the Spirit's guidance in the study of the Word of God, which was written by those whom the Holy Spirit inspired to its writing. The Bible, not the conscience, is the repository of God's truth. Beware lest you be wrong conscientiously. H. C. T.

No human spirit can enlighten itself, and no man can enlighten his fellow-man. Jesus Christ, the Mediator, gives light. He alone brings to earth a clear knowledge of God, and He alone finds a way to man's spirit with the fire of His personal love. When He is accepted, light is bestowed. This light may be dim and feeble at first, but soon it grows brighter, and presently it burns with a clear, strong flame. No one can, therefore, realize the true glory of his spiritual life until Jesus Christ becomes his Light. *H. M. Booth.*—There is a multitude of men whose lamps are certainly not dark, and yet who certainly are not the candles of the Lord. With a nature richly furnished to the very brim, and yet profane, impure, worldly, they scatter scepticism of all good and truth about them wherever they may go. If it be possible for the human candle, instead of being lifted up to heaven and kindled at the pure being of Him who is eternally and absolutely good, to be plunged down into hell, and lighted at the yellow flames that burn out of the dreadful brimstone of the pit, then we can understand the sight of a man, who is rich in every brilliant human quality, cursing the world with the continual exhibition of the devilish instead of the godlike in his life. *P. Brooks.*

29. "The glory of young men," says the royal preacher and sage, "is their strength." This is their peculiar excellence and charm—their distinctive crown of beauty. Every age of human life, like every other true work of God, has such a distinctive excellence—some special characteristic which pre-eminently belongs to it, and which constitutes the authentic stamp of its Maker's mind and hand. Everything which He hath made, and which remains in any measure as He made it, is beautiful ; but beautiful in its own place, and after its own kind. It has not only its *degree*, but its *style* of beauty, which is its own and not another's. Each is itself, and its true glory lies in being like itself, and the best of itself. So "the glory of young men is their strength." They have a strong heart, and a strong hand, and a strong pulse of life and action. They may not trust like the child, nor counsel like the hoary head, nor suffer and

endure like patient woman ; but they can do and dare, toil and fight, as none else can, and that is their glory. This is the idea, evidently, which was in the mind of the hoary Apostle of Love, when after writing successively to the children and the fathers in the faith, he addresses himself last of all to this class, and says, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong." They are to be strong in *courage*, in brave, resolute purpose, strong in all high and noble and manly sentiment, strong above all in that holy and unseen might which cometh from above, which lifts the soul above itself, which makes the meanest nature noble, the homeliest life sublime. They are to be strong in *youthful fervor*. Fervor is the inspiration of life, the fire of energy, the spring and moving power of action. If courage imparts steadfastness, fervor imparts intensity. The one gives solidity, the other impulse, enthusiasm. Fervor makes us not only brave, but chivalrous, heroic ; teaches us to hope great things, and attempt great things, and never to despair while we are in God's work and on God's side. It makes us not only do our work, but "do it with our might ;" not only put our hand to it, but throw our whole heart and soul into it. They are to be strong in *sobriety and self-control*. "Young men likewise exhort that they be sober-minded." If self control is for them difficult, it is just on that very account peculiarly necessary. Their eager passions and mutinous appetites must either be mastered, or they will master them. This is that sobriety, that self-discipline, and self-control of which the apostle speaks. It is a prime element of moral strength. Without it courage melts into effeminacy, and enthusiasm expires in self-indulgence and apathy. In self-control the soul gathers up its strength, rallies its scattered powers, subdues distracting elements, nerves and braces itself, takes possession of itself, asserts the command of all it is and all it can do ; and thus, with concentrated force, addresses itself to its appointed work, whether to do or to dare. *Islay Burns.*

30. The general sentiment is that a vigorous corporeal punishment is an effective remedy for the wicked man or boy, because it goes deep into his sensibilities—takes hold, when, by the supposition, nothing else will. Closely in this connection, Solomon had spoken of the "spirit of man" as "the candle of the Lord," going down deep into the soul ; but remembering that some men do their utmost to extinguish this candle, and *will* not be searched deeply by its light, he intimates that God's discipline must be his next and last resort. H. C.

CHAPTER XXI.

- 1 THE king's heart is in the hand of the LORD
as the watercourses :
He turneth it whithersoever he will.
- 2 Every way of a man is right in his own
eyes :
But the LORD weigheth the hearts.
- 3 To do justice and judgment
Is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.
- 4 An high look, and a proud heart,
Even the lamp of the wicked, is sin.
- 5 The thoughts of the diligent *tend* only to
plenteousness :
But every one that is hasty *hasteth* only to
want.
- 6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue
Is a vapour driven to and fro ; they *that seek*
them seek death.
- 7 The violence of the wicked shall sweep them
away ;
Because they refuse to do judgment.
- 8 The way of him that is laden with guilt is
exceeding crooked :
But as for the pure, his work is right.
- 9 It is better to dwell in the corner of the
housetop,
Than with a contentious woman in a wide
house.
- 10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil :
His neighbour findeth no favour in his
eyes.
- 11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is
made wise :
And when the wise is instructed, he receiveth
knowledge.
- 12 The righteous man considereth the house of
the wicked ;
How the wicked are overthrown to *their* ruin.
- 13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the
poor,
He also shall cry, but shall not be heard.
- 14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger,
And a present in the bosom strong wrath.
- 15 It is joy to the righteous to do judgment ;
But it is a destruction to the workers of
iniquity.
- 16 The man that wandereth out of the way of
understanding
Shall rest in the congregation of the dead.
- 17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man :
He that loveth wine and oil shall not be
rich.
- 18 The wicked is a ransom for the righteous ;
And the treacherous *cometh* in the stead of
the upright.
- 19 It is better to dwell in a desert land,
Than with a contentious and fretful woman.
- 20 There is precious treasure and oil in the
dwelling of the wise ;
But a foolish man swalloweth it up.
- 21 He that followeth after righteousness and
mercy
Findeth life, righteousness, and honour.
- 22 A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty,
And bringeth down the strength of the con-
fidence thereof.
- 23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue
Keepeth his soul from troubles.
- 24 The proud and haughty man, scorner is his
name,
He worketh in the arrogance of pride.
- 25 The desire of the slothful killeth him ;
For his hands refuse to labour.
- 26 There is that coveteth greedily all the day
long :
But the righteous giveth and withholdeth
not.
- 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomina-
tion :
How much more, when he bringeth it with
a wicked mind !
- 28 A false witness shall perish :
But the man that heareth shall speak so as
to endure.
- 29 A wicked man hardeneth his face :
But as for the upright, he ordereth his
ways.
- 30 There is no wisdom nor understanding
Nor counsel against the LORD.
- 31 The horse is prepared against the day of
battle :
But victory is of the LORD.

1. GOD can turn the mighty influence of kings into channels of beneficence, along which he can make it pour blessings all abroad at his own good pleasure. So he used Cyrus, the Persian king, for blessings upon His captive children in Babylon. So He makes even the

wrath of kings praise Himself. If he can shape the mighty issues of the counsels of kings with infinite ease, and even their very counsels themselves, how much more all the purposes and works of men of lesser power ! H. C.

3. Much of religion lies in doing judgment.

and justice, from a principle of duty to God and love to our neighbor; and this is more pleasing to God than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. II.

4. An high look and a proud heart (literally, lofty eyes and swelling of heart) are repulsive to God, because they are the manifestations of a spirit that disowns His supreme authority and disregards the law of love to man. *Lamp* or *light* is used figuratively to denote whatever the wicked most delight in and count most vital to their happiness. Since they are in rebellion against God, their lamp or light is precisely that which most sustains them in this rebellion, which constitutes their chief joy and chief reward in the ways of sin. Light is a common, not to say universal, symbol of prosperity and joy. That which is the source or fountain of such prosperity to the wicked is the thing here referred to. It feeds their pride, fosters their high looks; therefore this, along with their high looks and proud heart, goes to constitute their sin.

5. "Thoughts" (as usual in this Hebrew word) has the sense of plans, arrangements for business. The active and diligent are here put in contrast with the rash and headlong whose schemes are never well considered. H. C.—The diligent labors constantly and in a prudent manner with a well-concerted plan; but he who *urges on* with haste to acquire a fortune becomes poor. M. S.—Those that are hasty, that are rash and inconsiderate in their affairs and will not take time to think, that are greedy of gain by right or wrong, and make haste to be rich by unjust practices or unwise projects, they are in the ready road to poverty. Their contrivances, by which they hope to raise themselves, will ruin them.

6. This shows the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, by oppressing and overreaching those with whom they deal, by false-witness bearing, or by fraudulent contracts; of those that make no conscience of their assertions when there is anything to be got by a falsehood. While they are seeking wealth by unlawful practices they are really seeking death, they lay themselves open to the envy and ill-will of men by the treasures they get, and to the wrath and curse of God by the lying tongue wherewith they get them. H.—Nothing can be more clearly laid down than this: that God requires truth on the lips and justice in the balance; and that the opposites, untruth and dishonesty, God abhors. This doctrine, so clearly stated, needs to be strongly pressed upon conscience; for, al-

most more than the breach of chastity, the breach of integrity, the use of deceit to gain a worldly advantage or elude a worldly loss has left a sad blot on the character of many Christians, and enfeebled the moral influence of the Church. D. F.

8. Pure. Labor with all closest, most persistent application to conceive purity; what it would be to you if your soul were in it; the consciousness of it; the essential peace; the elevation above all passion and unregulated impulse; the singleness and simplicity of it; the glowing shapes and glorified visions of a pure imagination; the oneness of your soul with God; the conscious participation of what is highest in God, his untemptable chastity in goodness and truth. Work at this idea of purity, turn it round and round in your contemplations, reach after it, pray yourself into it, and have it thus as the highest conceivable good, the real good you seek—to be pure. H. B.

11. The contrast lies between the different ways and consequences of instruction. A simpleton learns through fear of punishment; the wise man through simple admonition.

17. The reason of this is obvious. He expends his property on his objects of pleasure, and therefore lays up nothing. M. S.—Giving himself up to sensual enjoyment, he will consume as fast as he earns, and even faster if he can, and so will accumulate nothing. Besides this, such sensuality of life steals a man's health and vigor away, and makes him prematurely old and feeble. H. C.—There would seem to be a wide distinction between the prodigal and the idler; but, in fact, they are closely related. Both are fools; both are on the way to poverty; the one scatters what he has and soon will have nothing; the other never has anything to scatter. Both make their bed in poverty. R. S. McArthur.

19. In the name of common sense, what is the reason for the worst side of so many men and women being seen where the most of their life is spent? Where so much of the happiness of others depends on us—viz., in the home, there let us show the best side of ourselves. H. Varley.

20. That is, the wise man will secure ample provision for his household; the foolish man will devour all he has instead of laying up some part of it in store. M. S.—The wise lay up for future use, and therefore have on hand, but fools lay aside nothing; but forthwith consume all. Solomon labors to encourage not only industry but a wise provision for the future. H. C.—The proverb may have also a

higher application. The wise man stores up all "treasure to be desired" of wisdom, all "oil" of Divine influence, which strengthens and refreshes, and so is ready at all times for the work to which the Master calls him. Compare the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25 : 1-13). E. H. P.

When the foolish have vainly lavished their treasure and their oil and come to poverty, they are like those virgins of the parable who cried in vain to others, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. Character, to be used for eternity, must be formed in time, and in *good* time ; and so, to be used for happiness in life, good habits must be *early* formed, and they will be a treasure to be desired in the house of the wise, and an oil of life in their dwelling. The habits of evil formed in the indulgence and gratification of youthful indolence, appetite, and passion, are draughts which, presented at manhood, take all its strength and capital away and make it bankrupt, make life a burden and a beggary ; presented at old age they make it an age of weakness, pain, and misery. On the other hand, good habits in early life, habits of true religion, of industry, of self-restraint, of moral purity, of reverence, kindness, decision, punctuality, and avoidance of evil example are a treasure put out at compound interest, and an inexhaustible oil of prosperity and happiness. They are the sure foundation of success in this life, and of life eternal. *Cheever*.

21. The repetition of "righteousness" in the second clause is obviously emphatic. The man who keeps that will assuredly find it, but he will find besides it the "life" and the "honor" which he was not seeking. E. H. P.—Those that *follow after righteousness* shall *find righteousness* ; God will give them grace to do good, and they shall have the pleasure and comfort of it ; they that make conscience of being just to others shall be justly dealt with by others, and others shall be kind to them. *Seek and you shall find*, and with it shall find both *life and honor*, everlasting life and honor, the *crown of righteousness*. H.—Taken from end to end the Bible is charged with righteousness ; it will have the neighbor loved as the man himself ; it will have the harvest like the seed-time ; it will insist upon right balances and full weights ; it will have no concealed iniquities ; it carries its candle of flame into the secrets of the mind, the hidden places of motive and purpose and ultimate, but unexpressed intent. J. P.

22. Here, again, the meaning is at once literal and figurative. Even in war, counsel does more than brute strength. But the proverb is

also a parable, and may be transferred to the warfare which is carried on in the inner battlefield of the soul. There also wisdom is mighty to the "pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10 : 4, where Paul uses the very words of the LXX. version of this passage), and the wise man scales and keeps the city which the strong man armed has seized and made his own. E. H. P.

23. Compare 13 : 3 and 12 : 13. So large a part of the mischiefs of life comes from abuse of the tongue that Solomon guarantees exemption from most of the ills of society to him who discreetly governs that unruly member. The Apostle James states the case with about equal strength (Jam. 3 : 2). H. C.—He that offends not in word is a perfect man. Speech is a sacred prerogative ; the tongue rules the word, and we should see to it that our hearts rule it. Let us weigh the import of what we utter, speak with the deliberation of rational and accountable beings, speak according to our real purposes and thoughts. J. H. T.

One of the greatest hindrances to personal piety—that which eats out the heart and soul of true religion—is an unrestrained and unchastened exercise of the tongue. If persons could but be persuaded to banish from their lips empty talk (talk relevant to nothing in particular, gossip about their neighbors' concerns and arrangements, little profanenesses of expression, and the like) and to leave only such speech as was instructive or amusing, a vast amount of moral and spiritual mischief would be swept away as so much rubbish out of the world, and men would be introduced by the effort into the atmosphere of holiness, as finding themselves unable to effect such a clearance without constant mindfulness of the presence of God. E. M. G.

26. Coveteth greedily. The covetous seek how much they can call their own, by whatever means—of how much benefit they can hold a monopoly, from how large a place in God's universe they can keep other men off, and how much envy they can rouse in rivals and neighbors. These have never mastered their baser and greedier instincts, and so have never known the Divine joy of being blessed for their benefactions, and have never tasted of the peace that passeth understanding. Very often such persons seem to succeed. It requires a spiritual judgment to uncover their emptiness, and show how real ruin is compatible with apparent success. F. D. H.

Avarice is content with the *bare possession* of the essence ; stopping short at the means, it is

satisfied without the end. By a strange infatuation it looks upon gold as its own end. Other vices have a particular view to enjoyment (falsely so called), but the very term *miser* is a confession of the misery which attends avarice; for, in order to save his gold, the miser robs himself. He cannot be said to possess wealth; wealth possesses him; or else he possesses it like a fever which burns and consumes him as if molten gold were circulating in his veins. Many vices wear out and are abandoned as age and experience increase, but avarice strikes deeper root as age advances; and, like the solitary tree of the desert, flourishes amid sterility where nothing else could survive. J. H.—Man is the only proprietor on earth, and the only miser. It is by blind instinct that the bee and the ant fill their garner. Man's ignorance of what himself is capable of enjoying throws him upon the capital error of looking to things exterior and alienable, as his wealth; and in making this ill choice he heaps to himself a world of care; for a thousand accidents may come and intervene between his passion and its object. Thus it is, that while other irregular desires bring their retributive sorrow after the hour of gratification is gone by, Avarice stands scourge in hand over her victim, and inflicts a cruel pang at every instant. I. T.

The *covetous*, the man who is under the dominion of the love of money, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." He may not have been an extortioner; but he was a lover of money. He may not have been fraudulent; but he was a lover of money. "He shall not inherit the kingdom of God." He has had his day and his object. He has sought and may have accumulated earthly possessions. By their instrumentality he may have gratified many other appetites and desires. But he did not seek first the kingdom of God; therefore he shall not obtain it. He "loved the world;" therefore he "shall perish with the world." He has wilfully bartered his soul for money. *Gisborne*.

27. The offering of the wicked is in itself unacceptable, because he cherishes neither love nor reverence for God. But when he brings it for the direct purpose of *fraud*, it becomes still more odious. M. S.

30, 31. Two companion-proverbs. Nothing avails against, nothing without, God. The horse appears here, as elsewhere in the Old Testament, as the type of warlike strength, used chiefly or exclusively in battle. E. H. P. —All the boasted preparations of man for victory in battle are vain without the help of God, to whom belongeth victory or deliverance. This expands the sentiment of the preceding verse. M. S.

CHAPTER XXII.

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| <p>1 A <i>good</i> name is rather to be chosen than great riches,
And loving favour rather than silver and gold.</p> <p>2 The rich and the poor meet together :
The LORD is the maker of them all.</p> <p>3 A prudent man seeth the evil, and hideth himself :
But the simple pass on, and suffer for it.</p> <p>4 The reward of humility <i>and</i> the fear of the LORD
Is riches, and honour, and life.</p> <p>5 Thorns <i>and</i> snares are in the way of the froward :
He that keepeth his soul shall be far from them.</p> <p>6 Train up a child in the way he should go,
And even when he is old he will not depart from it.</p> | <p>7 The rich ruleth over the poor,
And the borrower is servant to the lender.</p> <p>8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap calamity :
And the rod of his wrath shall fail.</p> <p>9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed ;
For he giveth of his bread to the poor.</p> <p>10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out ;
Yea, strife and ignominy shall cease.</p> <p>11 He that loveth pureness of heart,
For the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.</p> <p>12 The eyes of the LORD preserve <i>him that hath</i> knowledge,
But he overthroweth the words of the treacherous man.</p> <p>13 The sluggard saith, There is a lion without :
I shall be slain in the streets.</p> |
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- 14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit :
He that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.
- 15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child ;
But the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.
- 16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *gain*,
And he that giveth to the rich, *cometh* only to want.
- 17 Incline thine ear, and hear the words of the wise,
And apply thine heart unto my knowledge.
- 18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee,
If they be established together upon thy lips.
- 19 That thy trust may be in the LORD,
I have made *them* known to thee this day, even to thee.
- 20 Have not I written unto thee excellent things
Of counsels and knowledge ;
- 21 To make thee know the certainty of the words of truth,
That thou mayest carry back words of truth to them that send thee ?
- 22 Rob not the poor, because he is poor,
Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate :
- 23 For the LORD will plead their cause,
And despoil of life those that despoil them.
- 24 Make no friendship with a man that is given to anger ;
And with a wrathful man thou shalt not go :
- 25 Lest thou learn his ways,
And get a snare to thy soul.
- 26 Be thou not one of them that strike hands,
Or of them that are sureties for debts :
- 27 If thou hast not wherewith to pay,
Why should he take away thy bed from under thee ?
- 28 Remove not the ancient landmark,
Which thy fathers have set.
- 29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business ?
he shall stand before kings ;
He shall not stand before mean men.

1. A NAME truly good is the aroma from virtuous character. It is a spontaneous emanation from genuine excellence. It is a reputation for whatsoever things are honest, and lovely, and of good report. It is such a name as is not only remembered on earth, but written in heaven. *Hamilton*.—A man may desire the approbation and love of friends whom he esteems virtuous and wise. It is inseparable from love to wish to be beloved by its object, and a tender conscience is naturally pleased with the approbation of the wise and good. Both of these principles seem to be here approved by Solomon. But to wish for the “loving favor” of those we love, and a “good name” among the virtuous and wise, is quite a different thing from a general thirst for distinction—a sickly craving for admiration and applause. *E. D. Griffin*.—A good name is intrinsically precious ; but enslaved indeed is he who suspends his peace and comfort on the breeze of popular opinion. Now moral courage, resting on a sure and holy basis, treats with indifference the noisy censure or disesteem of ungodly men. It dares to act alone, and holds its head erect, and soul in high and noble dignity. *Jabez Burns*.

If a good name be more precious than great riches, no greater injury can be inflicted upon men than to wound their reputation. A heathen once said : “ The slanderer is the most terrible

of wild beasts.” *Anon*.—The citizen of Zion knows the worth of a good name, therefore he backbites not, defames no man, speaks evil of no man, makes not their faults the subject of his common talk, much less of his ridicule ; nor speaks of them at all but for edification. He makes the best of everybody and the worst of nobody. H.—Good men often outlive their bad names. They conquer by God’s help a place of honor for themselves in the judgment of coming times. As the heathen of the first age who called Christians the enemies of the human race were grievously in an error, so it has been since ; the world’s supposed enemies have been its true friends, and are owned as such when the tongues that maligned them have been silenced by death, and the reputations that were built on their disparagement are blasted. Thus time, God’s minister, corrects mistakes. T. D. W.

2. The course of Providence mingles the rich and the poor together everywhere. Therefore let each remember that the same God is the one Maker and Lord of both classes, and will protect each and all in their respective rights. H. C.—And let both remember that respect, consideration, and sympathy are due from each to the other. B.

The Lord is the Maker of them all. The sacred writer thus introduces all of us into an equal and common relation to God, who is the

great parent of us all. We are the creatures of the same hand, the subjects of the same government; we occupy the same economy of Divine providence and grace; and, as to our destination, we all stand in relation to the same future and eternal state of being. Yet these two divisions of society have existed in every period. It is impossible to avoid them, and any attempt to establish an equality of possessions in the present world would be replete with disappointment, confusion, rapine, and misery. The greatest disturbances mankind has ever experienced have arisen from abortive attempts of this nature; nor can any one seriously consider the causes from which these two conditions of society spring, but he must despair of ever realizing anything like equality or anything approaching to equality, as to the possessions and enjoyments of the present state. *R. Hall.*

The Bible does not teach communism; it preaches brotherhood. And the remedies which it proposes for poverty are not chronic spoliation, nor an impossible, self-destructive leveling down, but the recognition of the right relationship as toward God and between men. Work, help, love, these are the *liberté, égalité, fraternité* of the Bible; its panacea for the ills of society. A more difficult formula this than the other, which is mostly straw-fire, by which "society" can neither warm nor feed itself. *A. E.*—In that personal revelation of the living Word, the Incarnation, we find the most absolute of all possible prohibitions of all partialities in the Church—of race or nation, color or rank, property or environment. Why? Because what Christ took upon Him to make Him a Mediator was humanity, simple, whole, undivided. There is no piecing it off among classes any more than among nationalities. If it could be apportioned, graded by any Blue Book, stamped by any society-mark, classified by any sociology or anthropology, the mediatorial glory would be gone because the reality would be gone, and the light of the world would be eclipsed. *F. D. H.*

Both rich and poor are one at the centre. The differences are reciprocal and transient, while the points of agreement are permanent. The rich are essential to the poor; the poor to the rich. The glory of our age is that the differences between these classes are being obliterated. They are meeting together. Our souls are being lifted to a comprehension of this exalted ideal of the Scriptures. True, says Christ, the poor ye shall have always with you; but we are realizing that they are essen-

tially one with the rich, that God is the maker of all. *R. S. S.*—The rich and poor are brethren. The feelings and interests which they have in common are far more weighty than those outward circumstances that divide them. Rich and poor are equal when they stand at the foot of the Redeemer's cross, craving pardon for their sins; seeking His righteousness to cover their uncleanness. They are equal when they come before God to worship. They are equal when both shall stand before the judgment-seat of God. *Archbishop Thomson.*—Riches are no reproach and poverty is no merit; but the pride so apt to be bred of riches, the idleness, the injustice, the selfishness so often associated with them, is what God likes to reprove; and the graces that may be found in the poor man's home, the unwearied devotion to duty, the neighborliness and brotherly love, and above all the faith, the hope, and the charity are what He delights to honor. *W. G. B.*

3. The sense of the word rendered "prudent" is wary, forethoughtful, sagacious—the very qualities of mind which foresee impending evils. The "simple" here are the credulous, the men who are open to all temptations. "Passing on" is less strong than the Hebrew, which means they *pass over*—in this case, the line of prudence. Of course they meet their reward. *H. C.*

We say, *forewarned, forearmed*. It is a proverb of deep meaning. A man warned of an evil, which is not inevitable, may avoid it; he has the means of avoiding it if he will apply them. And even if the evil be inevitable, yet still, being forewarned he is forearmed, and may be prepared to encounter it, so that when it comes he may bear up manfully, and by the provisions he has been enabled to make, in the time given him for such preparation, may come forth, if not absolutely triumphant, yet not destroyed, nor fatally injured. Nay, the wise and earnest grappling with inevitable evil, and the patient endurance of it when it comes, the preparation for it as foreseen, and the discipline in passing through it, may be a great benefit to his character; and on the whole, the evil, he being forewarned of it, and having acted the part of a wise and noble nature in meeting and bearing it, may be an absolute blessing. *Cheever.*

4. Religion does very much consist in *humility and the fear of the Lord*—that is, walking humbly with God, we so reverence God's majesty and authority as to submit with all humility to the commands of his Word and the disposals of His providence. We have such low thoughts of ourselves as to behave humbly

toward God and man. Where the fear of God is there will be humility. And there is gotten by it *riches and honor*, comfort *and long life* in this world, as far as God sees good; at least, spiritual *riches and honor* in the favor of God and the promises and privileges of the covenant of grace, *and eternal life* at last. H.—If thou desire the love of God and man, be humble; for the proud heart, as it loves none but itself, so it is beloved of none but itself. The voice of humility is God's music, and the silence of humility is God's rhetoric. Humility enforces where neither virtue nor strength can prevail, nor reason. *Quarles.*

Beyond controversy, humility is indispensable to the true life of the soul. There are graces which may be given or withheld; there are experiences, assurances, raptures, ecstasies. But no man ever went to heaven without learning humility on this side of the grave. Without humility, a contrite heart and a prevailing prayer for pardon are impossible. It is only when the proud heart is broken that a man casts himself at the feet of our crucified Saviour, to pray for the atoning stream of blood which may wash out his deep stains of guilt, and give him peace in giving him pardon. Without humility religious progress is impossible. The true growth of the soul is not to be measured by our attempting many extraordinary duties, but by our power of doing simple duties well; and humility, when it reigns in the soul, carries this principle into practice. It bids us hallow our work, especially whatever may be to us hard or distasteful work, by doing it as a matter of principle. It bids us, when on our knees, use simple prayers. It enriches common acts of neighborly and social kindness with that intensity of moral effort which is due to every act of which the deepest moving power is the love of God. Without humility no soul that has turned to God and is learning to serve Him is for a moment safe. The whole life of the living soul is the work of Divine grace; and while pride claims merit for self, and therefore goes before a fall, humility confesses, day by day, "By the grace of God I am what I am." For humility is the condition and guarantee of grace; and, as Augustine says, there is no reason, apart from the grace of God, why the highest saint should not be the worst of criminals. H. P. L.

6. Train up a child. It is common sense to put the seal to the wax while it is soft; to go to the fountain-head, and guide the current of the stream; and to lay hold upon the young tendrils of the shooting vine, and to train

them as we would have them to go. *Jackson.*

—It is the law of the human nature that, when it is beginning to grow, it shall be soft as wax to receive all kinds of impressions, and then that it shall gradually stiffen and become hard as adamant to retain them. In our great museums you see stone slabs with the marks of rain that fell hundreds of years before Adam lived; and the footprint of some wild bird that passed across the beach in those old, old times. The passing shower and the light foot left their prints on the soft sediment; then ages went on, and it has hardened into stone; and there they remain and will remain forevermore. That is like a man's spirit; in the childish days so soft, so susceptible to all impressions, so joyous to receive new ideas, treasuring them all up, gathering them all into itself, retaining them all forever. And then, as years go on, habit, the growth of the soul into steadiness and power, and many other reasons beside, gradually make us less and less capable of being profoundly and permanently influenced by anything outside us; so that the process from childhood to manhood is a process of getting less impressible. A. M.

A scriptural training in youth starts a moral bias that is apt to survive and force its way, because it is in the line of our original character, and because the original motives are acting upon the conscience. Not that any moral training can restore the lost image of God. That must be created in us, as at the first. But these promptings of conscience and struggles after moral rectitude, if only outward, are some feeble revival of the old original bias to virtue. They are traces and hints of our first estate. What a gratifying fact is this, that scriptural instructions and moral habits, early confirmed, have this vitality. This thoroughly strange thing, in such a race and such a world as ours, ought to be insisted on everywhere. It is too important to be permitted to lie in silence. This "an early bias to good is inveterate"—ought to be written on the door-posts of every home and over every teacher's desk. Let no one lose faith in it. *Interior.*—The child believes what with discretion and persistency he is *taught* to believe. The child's creed is the mother's creed, and with nothing at the start but faith in his mother to guarantee it. He sees through his mother's eyes, thinks in his mother's thoughts, believes through his mother's faith, and calls the Bible *God's Book*, because she taught him to. C. H. P.

The child needs formal teaching by words, but his principles are formed and practical hab-

its moulded chiefly by that action of those around him which expresses their inner life. From this there is a subtle and pervasive influence that no direct teaching can counteract. M. H.—Little may a parent be aware of that infantile sagacity that translates *things* before it knows the meaning of words. Example sows the seeds of life's harvest, sometimes before a child can speak. That early home, by the still, quiet influence of example, moulds the character into such a shape, that all the after-years of probation, all life's storms, all the jar and bustle of business cannot change it. It is like a pen of iron and the point of a diamond graving on the rock. A child knows well and needs no one to tell it, that while words may speak the mind's knowledge, actions declare the heart. What a man *is*, is far more than what he *says*. Gillett.—The child knows no logic but that of the heart. Parental assertion and example are its only evidence; emotion its best proof. Here, therefore, example is everything. In proportion as the *spirit* of piety educates, the *means* become unimportant. It finds them without seeking. And that alone is deserving the name of education in which, however small the amount of knowledge imparted, that knowledge is sought to be *applied*; in which the great aim is to reach the heart of the child, and to impress it with a sacred regard for truth and duty, and a deep reverence for the will of God; in which the character is sought to be built up into habits of order, attention, and filial obedience, based on that piety which is the beginning of wisdom. J. H.

The child is capable of being trained for God, and God has entrusted him to the parent that he may be thus trained. The only effectual way in which the parent can do this is himself to be what the child should be. There is an example, an imperceptible and pervading influence that can be had in no other way. Let this be good in principle and judicious in outward form, and all other good influences will almost, of course, fall into its train. M. H.—The child looks and listens, and whatever tone of feeling or manner of conduct is displayed around him, sinks into his plastic, passive soul, and becomes a mould of his being ever after. The very handling of the nursery is significant, and the petulance, the passion, the gentleness, the tranquillity indicated by it, are all reproduced in the child. His soul is a purely receptive nature, and that, for a considerable period, without choice or selection. A little further on he begins voluntarily to copy everything he sees. Voice, manner, gait,

everything which the eye sees, the mimic instinct delights to act over. And thus we have a whole generation of future men, receiving from us their very beginnings and the deepest impulses of their life and immortality. They watch us every moment, in the family, before the hearth, and at the table; and when we are meaning them no good or evil, when we are conscious of exerting no influence over them, they are drawing from us impressions and moulds of habit, which, if wrong, no heavenly discipline can wholly remove; or, if right, no bad associations utterly dissipate. H. B.

Training up a child may be said to consist in four things—true teaching, discipline, example, and prayer. True teaching, or, if you will, the teaching of the truth which concerns it in its relations to God and man. Store children's minds with truth. Let them know all that it is right to do, both with respect to God and man, that they be not destroyed for lack of knowledge. Example. To tell a child what is to be done is a very valuable thing, but to show how it is done is far more valuable. The power of one's example is the power of character. Prayer. You are not left to this work alone. There is none in which you may more certainly calculate on the help of God, if you seek it, than in the endeavor to guide your children in the way that leads to heaven. He Himself is concerned for the welfare of your children. They are His gifts to you, and are meant to be, not curses, but blessings. He may seem for a season to delay His answers, but even while He delays He may be working out the very results you have so earnestly sought. Mellor.

All Christian training is summed up in this: "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This general exhortation has so many parts in it that we cannot even name them. But these are some. Look to the health of the body, for that is the basis in this world of other things. No studies or accomplishments should be allowed to injure that; for that, when injured, will affect injuriously all the higher things. Consider, as far as may be, the temperament and peculiarity of each. There is a Divine individualism of each soul, before which, when we find it, we should bow down as in the presence of a pure work of God, and to which we should yield as we do to the great steady laws. Give the mind knowledge of proper kinds, in due measures, at seasonable times. Develop the affections, truly and tenderly, under the leadings and breathings of the royal law of love. Try to put habits

into the life of industry, carefulness, and benevolence, from the very first, that the powers may work by these more easily. Provide for times of recoil and relaxation. Never be afraid of play—of what even might seem idleness to another if you are sure that it is wholesome rest. Above all, try to secure the whole heart for God. Everything must bend to that. The whole manifold culture should grow up into that. Throw around them, as you may instrumentally, so much of the Fatherhood of God, that they shall not be able without a tremendous and distressing struggle to leave it, and when at last away from it shall not be able to live without it. Let them know, without mistake, from your own lips, in face-to-face communication, that the good Shepherd loves them, is watching them with kindly care, is calling them by name, and waiting for their following. When they *follow Him*, you may sing in gladness and thankfulness of heart. *Raleigh.*

A wise parent will remember that it is the books which the child reads out of school which leave the deepest impression, and, therefore, require the most careful selection. Let him distinguish between children's books and childish books. Let him not fall into the mistake that everything must be written *down* to the comprehension of children. Their sense of interest runs ahead of their understanding and helps it on. He should know that manhood is not distinguished from childhood, not so much by *superiority* as by *difference* of capacity—and that no book suited for the child's department can be too *old* for it. J. H.—Hardly any reading can interest a child without contributing in some degree, though the book itself be afterward totally forgotten, to form the character; and the parents, therefore, who merely requiring from him a certain course of *study*, pay little or no attention to story-books, are educating him they know not how. *Whately.*

Children should always be fairly and kindly answered when they ask after anything they would know and desire to be informed about. Curiosity should be as carefully cherished in children as other appetites suppressed. *Locke.*—Table-talk ought to be such, in every family, as to make the hour of home meal-time one of the most attractive as well as one of the most beneficial hours of the day to all the children. But in order to make table-talk valuable, parents must have something to talk about at the table, must be willing to talk about it there, and must have the children lovingly in mind as they do their table-talking. S. S. T.

"Children, obey your parents," is a Divine

command. Until they come to years of understanding God expresses His will to them through us. We teach them to obey us in order that it may become easy to submit to the will of God at a later period. We also teach them obedience because they are ignorant of their own best interests, and incapable of safely directing themselves. Hence, it is not so much our prerogative to require obedience as the child's privilege to yield it. With that thought in mind, what parent can be impatient with a child who has been disobedient? Few parents neglect to blame their children when they do wrong, but many a child never hears a word of commendation. Their ears grow accustomed to the language of reproof, while their hearts ache for encouragement in their efforts to do right. An appreciative word at these times, warm from a loving parental heart, will not only bring happiness to a deserving child, but will go further in establishing right principles than many reproofs. But reproof and praise should be given with no other thought than the good of the child. To reprove from a mere sense of our own right, or to vary in our manner of reproof according to our own moods and tempers, is injustice to those too weak to defend themselves. Every child has a right to a share of the time and personal attention of both parents. The father who is too busy to give an occasional hour to his children is robbing them of more than he can ever will to them. To think he has done his full duty when he has made proper provision for their physical and intellectual wants is more than a mistake. It is a crime. When a father becomes merely a "provider," he consents to a loss of manhood; and if he does not lose his self-respect, he will, at least, lose the respect of his children. Mothers are expected to come in hourly contact with their families, but who pleads for the children's right to their fathers? Not but what fathers are affectionate and indulgent. Not unfrequently does a father yield a desired point to a child that the mother would unhesitatingly refuse; not because he loves him more, but because he is less acquainted with him. Many a father would be a better man if he lived with his children a little more. Let fathers and mothers both remember that no one can take their place in the children's lives. *Free Church Monthly.*

Be very gentle with the children God has given you; watch over them constantly; reprove them earnestly, but not in anger. In the forcible language of Scripture, "Be not bitter against them." "Yes, they are good boys,"

I once heard a kind father say ; “ I talk to them very much, but do not like to beat my children—the world will beat them.” It was a beautiful thought, though not elegantly expressed. Yes, there is not one child in the circle round the table, healthful and happy as they look now, on whose head, if long enough spared, the storm will not beat. Adversity may wither them, sickness may fade, a cold world may frown on them, but amid all let memory carry them back to a home where the law of kindness reigned, where the mother’s reproving eye was moistened with a tear, and the father frowned “ more in sorrow than in anger.” *Elihu Burritt*.—We are to love our children as they are to obey their parents, “ in the Lord ;” never forgetting that He who lends may resume His gifts whensoever it pleases Him ; never forgetting that the fairest flowers of the family may soon wither and die ; ever striving as we keep our children in their own place in the house nor allow them to usurp ours, to keep them in their own place in our hearts nor allow them to usurp God’s ; ever seeking in our nurseries to rear plants for heaven, and so train up our children in the saving knowledge of Christ and the devout love of God, that we shall have the consolation of knowing, if death enters our house and plucks them from our arms, that our loss is their gain ; that if a chair in the circle by our fireside is empty, a blood-bought throne is filled in heaven ; that if there is one voice less in the Psalm when we are assembled for worship, there is one more ringing sweet and clear in glory, praising Him through whose dying love and in whose blissful presence we shall join our lost and loved—to weep and to part no more. *Guthrie*.

Too many Christian people seem to suppose that their children, by virtue of their birth, belong to the devil and have to be delivered from the devil by Divine grace when capable of understanding and responding to the Gospel. The precise contrary of this is true. They belong to Christ by virtue of their birth, and have to be kept by the power of Divine grace from going over to the devil. It is this great fact which is affirmed in baptism. Infants are born the subjects of Christ, and He will keep them safe from His foes and theirs, until they revolt against His authority. They are His, not because their parents dedicate them to Him, but because He died for them and has “ received power over all flesh.” They are His more truly than they are ours ; we acknowledge this claim when we bring them to receive

baptism. Herein lies the significance of the rite, so far as parents are concerned. Children should be reminded, as soon as they are capable of understanding it that Christ claimed them as His own in their infancy ; parents should constantly remember that they have implicitly acknowledged the claim. In baptism it is not affirmed that the children ought to become Christ’s, but that they are His. Already, apart from their own choice, apart from the act of their parents, they are His. They belong, not to a lost race, but to a race that has been redeemed by “ the precious blood of Christ,” and over which He reigns. *Lon. Cong.*—They are born into a redeemed world. They belong to Christ from infancy, and He says, “ Take them, and train them for Me.” They should be so treated as to see in their parents some likeness to their heavenly Father before they can understand verbal teaching. They should be so treated that the truth may be at once received, “ Like as a father pitieth his children,” and “ As one whom his mother comforteth.” As a child cannot remember when it began to love and obey its parents, so should be its love to God. This may be expected if the parents not only teach doctrine but represent Christ. Children soon discover whether a parent’s chief aim is to please God or to win the world ; whether the child’s nurture in Christ or worldly advancement is most desired. They will be more likely to imitate what parents are, than to do what parents say. They learn more by what they see in them than what they hear from them. The writer well remembers, when a child, overhearing his mother, in her mid-day retirement, praying so earnestly for his “ salvation” that he longed to get “ salvation,” whatever it was, so as to give his mother what would be her greatest delight. By such training, home and school will become nurseries for church and heaven. *Newman Hall*.

9. A “ bountiful eye” is literally a *good* eye, in the sense of an eye *to pity* : an eye that sees suffering and want, and indicates a heart and a hand of generous benevolence. God will bless such an eye. H. C.

11. *Whoever loves purity, grace (i.e., gracious or acceptable) will be his lips, and the king will be his friend. Michaelis*.—Purity in heart implies a care of the heart ; a discipline of the imagination ; a covenant with the eyes not to look upon vanity ; an avoidance of all appearance of evil ; a conscientious regulation of our secret thoughts and affections as in the sight of that God with whom we have to do, who requires purity as well as truth in the inward part. *R. Hall*.

God is for that man, and that man is for God, who carries about with him a pure heart ; heart purity makes a man beloved of heaven. Many affect pure language, pure houses, pure habits, pure hands, pure air, pure meat and drink, who yet, for want of purity of heart, shall never see the face of God in glory ; heart purity speaks a man eternally happy. *II. Brooke.*—The divinest views of life penetrate most clearly into the meanest emergencies, and, so far from petty principles being best proportioned to petty trials, a heavenly spirit taking up its abode with us can alone sustain well the daily toils, and tranquilly pass the humiliations of our condition ; and, to keep the house of the soul in order and pure, a God must come down and dwell within. *Martineau.*

16. This man pursues two methods of enriching himself : he robs the poor ; he gives to the rich ; but in both cases he will only impoverish himself. His two methods have the same end in view, and both alike will fail of the end he seeks, and will really bring him not riches but ruin. *H. C.*—Whatever you save as against righteousness, justice, and love has no lasting in it. God's judgment or blessing rests upon the whole flock, floor, and winepress. The money saved from the man who had a right to it shall be lost. Do not imagine that God has abandoned all the commercial relations of life and handed over marts and exchanges to the dominion of the devil. The Lord still reigneth, and all history, interpreted by a Christian spirit, ends in this, that whoever endeavors selfishly to upset the Divine regulation is never really the richer for the money he has stolen. Honest money goes far and brings sweetness with it and light and hope, and a blessing full of unction may be asked upon the little loaf bought by the honestly-earned penny. Whatever we have let it be honest money, and then the more we have the more everybody else will have, for we shall be but trustees and stewards, sowing with both hands and reaping with both hands night and day. This is God's law ; this doctrine lies at the very root of Divine legislation and social economy. *J. P.*

Thus endeth the second division of the Book of Proverbs, containing chaps. 10-22 : 16. What follows is miscellaneous down to chap. 25. It is collected from different sources, and might have the title which is proffered to us in v. 17—viz., The Words of the Wise. *M. S.*

17-19. With v. 17 commences a third part of this Book of Proverbs, distinct in some points of style and method from those which precede or which follow. This part closes

with chap. 24. The writer invites most diligent attention to the words of wisdom which he has to speak. "Shall be fitted in thy lips" (v. 18) means shall be confirmed or established upon thy lips, to be always (as we might say) at thy tongue's end, fresh in memory and ever at hand, not only for reflective thought but for ready utterance ; words in season fitly spoken. I have taught thee these great truths in order that thou mayest fully trust the Lord. *H. C.*

18. The words of the wise should be so thoroughly considered and learned, that the learner will be always ready to speak of them or to recite them. We express the like idea by saying, *Learn by heart, i.e.,* make them quite familiar. *M. S.*—The counsels of the wise should be not in the heart only, or on the lips only, but on the lips from the abundance of the heart. What is "pleasant" in the sight of God and man is the union of the two, belief passing into profession, profession resting on belief. *E. H. P.*

20, 21. The emphasis is here most laid upon this, that they are *made known to thee, even to thee* and *written to thee* as if it were a letter directed to thee by name ; it is suited to thee and to thy case ; it is intended for thee, to be a rule to thee, and by it thou must be judged. We cannot say of these things, They are good things, but they are nothing to us ; no, they are of the greatest concern imaginable to us. *To make thee know the certainty of the words of truth.* That thou mayest know what is truth, mayest plainly distinguish between it and falsehood, and mayest know upon what grounds thou receivest and believest the truths of God. It is desirable to know, not only *the words of truth*, but *the certainty of them* ; that our faith may be intelligent and rational, and may grow up to a full assurance. *H.*

The Bible itself, studied in its text, and compared with all else that the world has to offer as bringing to us direct messages from God, furnishes ample and irrefragable evidence that only the Author of our own being could have been the Author of that Book of books, with all that it shows us of ourselves, and with all that it discloses concerning our needs, our duties, and our destiny. *S. S. T.*—If religion is to be a practical thing, it must depend, not upon beautiful thoughts, but upon matter-of-fact certainties. Its truths must come to us in a form in which we can carry them with us, and bring them to bear upon our motives in the hour of temptation. When tempted we need something solid to fall back upon ; not a picture, not a mist, not a view, not an hypothesis,

but a fact. For eighteen centuries Christianity has responded to this supreme necessity of the soul of man. And we may be sure that if she had done otherwise she would long ago have ceased to command interest at the hands of those who seek in religion, not an amusement for the passing hour, but a kind friend, with a firm hand, who will guide them through the changes and chances of this mortal life to the gate of that other world which we must all, in whatever guise, reach at last. H. P. L.

The Bible grapples with *the highest subjects* which can engage the attention of mankind. It advances instantly to the highest lines of spiritual inquiry. God, creation, invisible worlds, sin, death, immortality, are its familiar themes. But more important than the fact of its grappling with such subjects is its peculiar method of treating them. Its approach, so to speak, is invariably from the higher side; the Bible *reveals*, it does not *suggest*; it *declares*, it does not *investigate*. Looked at in the light of presumptive inspiration, this is precisely the proper result. If God has spoken at all, He must have spoken positively and authoritatively. J. P.—The point of view of the writers in the Bible is the Divine. Here is the strong proof of the genuineness and authenticity of any part of the Scriptures. Here is stronger proof of inspiration than that of miracles. In the Bible is revealed a law of conduct from which men would withdraw if they could. The human mind would not originate it. We have also here presented a human character as unlike what we find in man as the imagination can conceive. So the promises touching the needs of men are not at all what men would have thought necessary. Man does not believe he has need of forgiveness, save as enlightened by the Bible. He would say, "I need to be educated; I need more power; I live as best I know." Even now, after all that has been wrought by the bleeding hands of Christ on earth, men feel little the need of a Saviour. So all through the Scriptures the point of view is God's not man's. The law that is uttered is Divine; the promises given are Divine; the judgment of human nature, the cause of its woes, its needs, its all, is most manifestly from above. To understand any part of the Bible we must look at it from this Divine standpoint. R. S. S.

The *style* of the Book accommodates itself to the modes of thought and speech common among men in their successive generations, rather than to the technicalities of science or the modes of thought and speech current among

learned men. While a Divine book, therefore, it is the most human of books. The infinite mind that suggests its truths presents their finite side toward finite men that they may apprehend and commune with them. S. R.—If the Bible was to be adapted to human wants, it must have a human side complete and perfect. It is by the complete incorporation of all human methods of expressing truth that the Bible is made an intelligible and adequate revelation of the Divine will; and to criticise the Bible, because it employs every device of language and literature by which truth is conveyed from one mind to another, is to reveal the fallibility of our own logic rather than the imperfection of the Bible. A revelation from God that did not come in human costume, and that was not penetrated with the spirit of human sympathy, would be ill adapted to its purpose, and would be like a Saviour who should have come neither eating nor drinking, and subject to no ordinary temptations. But as it behooved Christ to take upon Him not the form of angels, but of the sons of Abraham, and to be tempted in all respects as we are, yet without sin; so it behoves the Divine revelation to be altogether human in its form, except that it give no positive countenance to error. G. F. W.

The understanding has its proper work to do with respect to the Bible, because the Bible consists of human writings and contains a human history. Only let us remember that the understanding cannot ascend to things Divine; that for these another faculty is necessary—reason or faith. If this faculty be living in us, then there can be no rationalism; and what is called so is then no other than the voice of Christian truth. Where a man's writings show that he is keenly alive to the Divine part of Scripture, that he sees God ever in it and regards it truly as His Word, his judgments of the human part in it are not likely to be rationalistic; and if his understanding decides according to its own laws upon points within its own province, while his faith duly tempers it and restrains it from venturing upon another's dominion, the result will in all probability be such as commonly attends the use of God's manifold gifts in their just proportions—it will image after our imperfect measure the holiness of God and the truth of God. It is very true and should be acknowledged in the fullest manner, that for the study of the highest moral and spiritual questions another faculty than the understanding is wanting; and that without this faculty the understanding alone cannot arrive at truth. But it is no less true, that while

there is, on the one side, a faculty higher than the understanding, which is entitled to pronounce upon its defects; "for He that is spiritual judgeth all things," so there is a clamor often raised against it, not from above, but from below—the clamor of mere shallowness and ignorance, and passion. Wisdom is gained, not by renouncing or despising the understanding, but by adding to its perfect work the perfect work of reason, and of reason's perfection, faith. *T. Arnold.*

If any man, says Jesus, *wills* to do the Father's will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. An obedient spirit leads the inquiring mind to such a perception of the internal, historical, and practical evidences of the Gospel as gives sufficient assurance to himself that it is of God and not of man. And the combined testimony of the Evangelical Church in all her branches seals the truth, as thus certified by so many individual experiences, as the power of God unto salvation. Or, to state the doctrine more fully, the Bible, as the inspired Word of God, is the ultimate standard and the infallible rule of faith and practice; it is known to be the Word of God not only by its internal contents and character and by the Christian consciousness of the individual believer, but by the like consciousness, the sanctified judgment, and the uniform testimony of the living, spiritual Church, both of the past and the present, the whole family of God on earth and in heaven; and this catholic Church is known, not as a particular mechanical organism, but by its fruits—the fruits of practical faith, and earnest, continuous consecration to the moral and spiritual ends and objects of its high calling, whatever the imperfections of its formulated beliefs or organizations, or of character in many of its several members. The Church was indeed before the Bible; but the Bible, since written, is the Church's text-book and guide, and they are mutual witnesses for each other through the Holy Spirit in both together. *R. W. Patterson.*

Carry back words of truth. Knowledge is given us to do good with, that others may light their candle at our lamp, and that we may in our place serve our generation according to the will of God. And those who make conscience of keeping God's commandments will be best able to *give a reason of the hope that is in them.* *H.*

22, 23. To rob and oppress the rich is a great sin; but to rob and oppress the poor is a greater; but to rob and oppress the poor because he is poor, and wants money to buy justice, is the top of all inhumanity and impiety.

To oppress any one is sin; but to oppress the oppressed is the height of sin. Poverty, and want, and misery should be motives to pity; but oppressors make them the whetstones of their cruelty and severity, and therefore the Lord will plead the cause of His poor oppressed people against their oppressors without fee or fear. *Anon.*—Poverty is the load of some, and wealth is the load of others, perhaps the greater load of the two. It may weigh them to perdition. Bear the load of thy neighbor's poverty and let him bear with thee the load of thy wealth. Thou lightenest thy load by lightening his. *Augustine.*

26, 27. This admonition has occurred already (6:1-5 and 11:15). The doctrine of suretyship as it appears in this Book of Proverbs should be studied and judged of in the light of the age of Solomon and of the Mosaic system. From Moses to Solomon the Jews had never been a commercial people. For obvious reasons it was manifestly the Divine policy to prevent them from becoming such. Their system of agriculture, with no costly implements, required but little capital. Hence while they kept aloof from traffic, they had but the least possible occasion to loan money on the guarantee of another. *H. C.*

28. The primary application, possibly even the only one, makes the words a protest against the grasping covetousness which leads men to add house to house and field to field (Isa. 5:8), regardless of the rights of the poor upon whose inheritance they encroach. *E. H. P.*

29. Such men as Joseph and Daniel work themselves up to high responsibilities by dint of their "diligence in business." They bring to their service capacity, energy, industry, application. Doing everything they attempt in the best manner possible, they soon come before kings because they are wanted. *H. C.*—Not only is vital godliness perfectly consistent with commercial success, it ought to be a means thereto. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business?" asks the Book of Proverbs. "He shall stand before kings, . . . he shall not stand before mean men." And who should be more diligent than the servant of the Most High God? But godliness, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, naturally brings riches in its train. Diligence and frugality, the children of true religion, are in turn the parents of wealth. *J. M. Oxley.*

The man of methodical industry and honorable pursuits realizes, says Coleridge, the ideal divisions of time, and he gives a character and

individuality to its movements. If the idle are described as killing time, *he* may justly be said to call it into life and moral being while he makes it the distinct object not only of the *consciousness*, but of the *conscience*. He organizes the hours, and gives them a soul ; and that, the very essence of which is to pass away, he takes up into his own permanence, and endows with the imperishableness of a spiritual nature. Of the good and faithful servant, continues our philosopher, whose energies, thus directed, are thus methodized, it may rather be said that he lives in time than that time lives in him. His days, months, and years, as the stops and punctual marks in the records of duties performed, will remain when time shall be no more.

W. H. Adams.—To do what we have to do deliberately, carefully, punctiliously, conscientiously, that is the main concern. Virtuous diligence is a continual exercise of the understanding, of reason, of reflection, of self-command. The industrious man lives in the entire, true, intimate consciousness of himself. He rejoices in his life, his faculties, his endowments, his time. He can give an account of the use and application of them, and can therefore look back upon the past with satisfaction, and into the future without disquietude. He experiences neither languor nor irksomeness. He who really loves work can never be wanting in means and opportunities for it. To him every occupation is agreeable, even though it procure him no visible profit. He alone knows the pleasures of rest, for he alone really wants it, he alone has deserved it, he alone can enjoy it without reproach. *Zollikofer.*

A man industrious in his calling, if without the fear of God, becomes a drudge to worldly ends—vexed when disappointed, overjoyed in success. Mingle but the fear of God with business, it will not abate a man's industry, but sweeten it ; if he prosper he is thankful to God that gives him power to get wealth ; if he miscarry he is patient under the will and dispensation of the God he fears. It turns the very employment of his calling to a kind of religious duty and exercise of his religion, without damage or detriment to it. *Sir Matthew Hale.*—Many of the best and most valuable Christian disciples we have, are such as come up out of the walks of business. They know how to move with alertness and turn their hand nimbly as things require, keeping everything still in the training of order and practical system ; playing in, under these and to fill them out, all most practical mercies and tenderest graces. So that if we want the best engineering of

counsel and the most energetic flexibilities of movement, we are more likely to get our supply from the class of disciples in trade than from any other. Operations are their study, and they get limbered in it for all most cautiously safe and practically efficient operations in religion. *H. B.*

The Christian man of business has, as the foundation of all, a supreme love to God and a deep conviction that religion is the principal thing, the oxygen which is let down into the mine ere the miner descends to dig in it, rendering it safe for him to work ; he resolves that it is necessary for him to be religious, though it is not to be rich ; he makes time on his busiest days for family and private devotions ; he lives with his household as its head, not as its slave, toiling for its support. He will himself know something personally of the luxury of doing good ; he will seek a blessing on every day's transactions, give thanks for success, be content with honest gains, and not cast down by losses ; he will not obtrude his Christian way of doing business pharisaically upon others, as a model ; he will honor God and bless his fellow-men with offerings laid aside as God hath prospered him ; and this would be the Christian man of business, and this the way for him to be kept from the evil that is in the world. *W. H. Lewis.*—A man can maintain the love of God by faith and prayer, and go on to make all most solid attainments of character in the life-occupation of trade. When the question how is raised, the very first, always indispensable thing is that he shall be faithfully set to it, and expect to succeed only by fighting out the great human battle with self-seeking and the love of money, and by standing fast in God's name in all holiest integrity. He must not go into trade as any sharp work to be shrewdly done ; he must not pitch himself recklessly into making his fortune ; he must not look upon his business future with a mind wholly slack toward God and religion, willing to be floated whither the tide will carry him. No true character is ever made in that way in any employment. And it is precisely in that way that trade has come to be regarded as a kind of life so pre-eminently hostile to the interests of character. But the man who is in it can have and is bound to have God with him in it ; to begin his day with God's smile, to end it in God's approbation, and to pass it all through in the testimony that he pleases God. Going thus into and onward in trade, he will have no difficulty in being a Christian in it. He is fast anchored in all right practice and

right living by holding himself to courses that permit the enjoyment of God, and then the enjoyment of God will in turn hold him to his courses. Such a man can be a Christian anywhere, and will as certainly be in trade as anywhere else. H. B.

The duty of the Christian is plain—not to avoid the acquiring of riches, but to show the world how riches rightly acquired may be rightly expended. No other can do this so well as he. The man who has piled up millions by corners in grain or pork, by railroad wrecking or breaking banks, may, forsooth, endeavor to effect a compromise with his own conscience, or, lacking that troublesome monitor, with public opinion, by spasmodically handing over some portion of his unlawful

gains to universities or hospitals ; but there is no moral value in such a proceeding. It is the continuous, consistent employment of wealth in the work of the Lord that tells. It is when one's business is "done in the name of Jesus, in the spirit of consecration ; its gains made useful in a Christ-like way ; its ventures all baptized in prayer ; its extension sought only as a means to greater good ; its whole conduct and character and profit decided by considerations pertaining to the next world as well as to this." (H. Johnson.) Riches accumulated in this spirit will bring with them no poison that need hereafter be extracted ; and only thus can be realized the sacred truth that "the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." J. M. Oxley.

CHAPTER XXIII.

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| <p>1 WHEN thou sittest to eat with a ruler,
Consider diligently him that is before thee ;</p> <p>2 And put a knife to thy throat,
If thou be a man given to appetite.</p> <p>3 Be not desirous of his dainties ;
Seeing they are deceitful meat.</p> <p>4 Weary not thyself to be rich ;
Cease from thine own wisdom.</p> <p>5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is
not ?
For <i>riches</i> certainly make themselves wings,
Like an eagle that flieth toward heaven.</p> <p>6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an
evil eye,
Neither desire thou his dainties :</p> <p>7 For as he thinketh within himself, so is he :
Eat and drink, saith he to thee ;
But his heart is not with thee.</p> <p>8 The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou
vomit up,
And lose thy sweet words.</p> <p>9 Speak not in the hearing of a fool ;
For he will despise the wisdom of thy words.</p> <p>10 Remove not the ancient landmark ;
And enter not into the fields of the father-
less :</p> <p>11 For their redeemer is strong ;
He shall plead their cause against thee.</p> <p>12 Apply thine heart unto instruction,
And thine ears to the words of knowledge.</p> <p>13 Withhold not correction from the child :
For if thou beat him with the rod, he shall
not die.</p> | <p>14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod,
And shalt deliver his soul from Sheol.</p> <p>15 My son, if thine heart be wise,
My heart shall be glad, even mine :</p> <p>16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice,
When thy lips speak right things.</p> <p>17 Let not thine heart envy sinners :
But <i>be thou</i> in the fear of the LORD all the
day long :</p> <p>18 For surely there is a reward (or, <i>future</i>) ;
And thy hope shall not be cut off.</p> <p>19 Hear thou, my son, and be wise,
And guide thine heart in the way.</p> <p>20 Be not among winebibbers ;
Among gluttonous eaters of flesh :</p> <p>21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come
to poverty :
And drowsiness shall clothe a man with
rags.</p> <p>22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee,
And despise not thy mother when she is old.</p> <p>23 Buy the truth, and sell it not ;
Yea, wisdom, and instruction, and under-
standing.</p> <p>24 The father of the righteous shall greatly re-
joice :
And he that begetteth a wise child shall have
joy of him.</p> <p>25 Let thy father and thy mother be glad,
And let her that bare thee rejoice.</p> <p>26 My son, give me thine heart,
And let thine eyes delight in my ways.</p> |
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- 27 For a whore is a deep ditch ;
And a strange woman is a narrow pit.
28 Yea, she lieth in wait as a robber,
And increaseth the treacherous among men.
29 Who hath woe ? who hath sorrow ? who
hath contentions ?
Who hath complaining ? who hath wounds
without cause ?
Who hath redness of eyes ?
30 They that tarry long at the wine ;
They that go to seek out mixed wine.
31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is
red,

- When it giveth its colour in the cup,
When it goeth down smoothly :
32 At the last it biteth like a serpent,
And stingeth like an adder.
33 Thine eyes shall behold strange things,
And thine heart shall utter froward things.
34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in
the midst of the sea,
Or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.
35 They have stricken me, *shalt thou say*, and
I was not hurt ;
They have beaten me, and I felt it not :
When shall I awake ? I will seek it yet
again.

1-3. "Consider diligently" not so much *what* as "*who* is before thee." Solomon exhorts us to consider thoughtfully where we are, in whose presence we are sitting, and how much may depend on the impression we may make upon his mind by our manner and bearing at his luxurious table. Let it be suggested that self-control is always *manly* (as opposed to beastly), and that we always sit at table in the presence of the *Great King* !

4, 5. An admonition against making riches the chief end of one's labor. "Cease from thine own wisdom," as bearing on the subject in hand, must mean, Cease to depend on thine own sagacity, shrewdness, skill in making money. Solomon assumes that the supreme pursuit of wealth is sure to fail of its object. Wilt thou let thine eyes *fly upon* riches ?—*i.e.*, turn eagerly, with longing look as if to rush with outspread wings upon them ? But they *are not* ; they will not be there ; they vanish from your view ; they suddenly elude your grasp and your hand is upon nothing ; for they take wings like an eagle and are away ! See similar sentiments in Paul (1 Tim. 6 : 9, 10) and below (28 : 20)—a lesson which men of the world are sadly slow to learn. H. C.—The things of this world have a real existence in nature and are the real gifts of Providence, but in the kingdom of grace they are *things that are not* ; they are not a happiness and portion for a soul ; are not what they promise to be nor what we expect them to be ; they are a show, a shadow, a sham upon the soul that trusts to them ; they are not, for in a little while they will not be ; they perish in the using. It is therefore folly for us to set our eyes upon them ; to admire them as the best things and appropriate them to ourselves as our good things, and to aim at them as our mark at which all our actions are levelled. . . . There is a burden of care in getting, of fear in keeping,

of temptation in using, of guilt in abusing, of sorrow in losing, and of responsibility in at last accounting for riches. H.

The certain way to be truly rich is not to be so solicitous to increase a fortune as to give limits to our desires. For whoever is always grasping at more confesses he is still in want, and is therefore miserable and poor, because in the midst of all his affluence he wants that contentment and moderation of his desires which only can render any person rich and happy. *Plutarch*.—Neither contentment nor discontentment arises from the outward condition, but from the inward disposition. If a man is not content in that state he is in, he will not be content in any state he would be in. *J. Mason*.

6-8. Sentiment : "Beware of flattering and deceitful men, who show you special civility only to mislead you, and to put you off your guard. Their courtesies will be loathed, when their real design comes to be known." Here are *three* connected verses again. M. S.

7. As he thinketh within himself, so is he. This is the Hebrew way of telling us, in a casual word about feasting, that a man's inmost thinking is the true index to his character. *J. Clifford*.—The idea plainly is that a man's thinking exhibits the nature of the man. The same idea is brought out by the tree and its fruits, and the fountain and its waters. The thinking does not make the man, but the man makes the thinking. We want to know what his *real* thinking is, in order to judge of his character. A man may be smooth, polite, kindly spoken—but we require more than that, because we have learned from observation that this may only be a method of hiding and yet accomplishing bad purposes. *Interior*.

Every man is as the objects are with which he converses. A man may better know what he is by eyeing the objects with which his soul does mostly converse, than by observing his

most pompous services. *T. Brooks.*—It is the habitual thought that frames itself into our life. It affects us even more than our intimate social relations do. Our confidential friends have not so much to do in shaping our lives as thoughts have which we harbor. *F. W. Teal.*—Our thoughts are the measure of our characters, because all the elements of our being find expression in our thoughts. The intellect, the affections, the motives, and the attainments, all have their part in shaping our thoughts. Our opinions and judgments are miniatures of ourselves. *S. S. T.*

There is no fruit which actually we bring forth, be it good or bad, but it proceeds from the voluntary thoughts. Wherefore, ordinarily, these give the best and surest measure of the frame of men's minds. *Owen.*—The "mind" in you is what you are, in your thoughts, desires, and aims. Not all the thoughts which you have belong to your mind, but only such thoughts as are intensely vital, stirring your deepest emotions and impelling you to action. Not all that you feel belongs to your mind, but only such emotions as spring out of your thoughts and shape your conduct. Not everything that you do shows what your mind is, but only such actions as are the outcome of rational conviction and genuine love. The "mind" of a man is what he is in the organic unity of his secret thoughts, affections, and aims. He has the mind of the flesh, if the gravitation of his inmost self is toward the things of the flesh, the things that minister to selfish ease and ambition, no matter how refined his pursuits and habits may be. *Behrends.*—My works will be answerable to my thoughts; if my thoughts be wicked or fruitless, so will my actions be. My thoughts are the seed that lies in the ground out of sight; my works are the crop which is visible to others; according to the seed, whether good or bad, such will the crop be. How much it concerns me that my heart be sown with pure and holy thoughts, that my crop may tend both to my credit and comfort! *Swinnock.*—That is a man's mind and will which is habitually his mind and will. When the very inclination and bent of your will is right, then only is your heart right. It is not an extraordinary act that you can try yourselves by, but such a free course and tenor of your lives as will prove that you have a new nature, or a heart inclined and habituated to God. The main business, therefore, is to prove that you are habitually resolved. *Baxter.*

Character is a very different thing from rep-

utation. Reputation is easily gained, lost and gained again, as the world goes. Character, on the contrary, is a thing of slow growth and difficult acquirement. When well developed and firmly fixed, it has great staying power. If the character is good, its possessor is supremely concerned in its careful preservation. If bad, he knows it as no one else can know, and he also knows that, unlike his bodily condition, it cannot be doctored and repaired on short notice. *Interior.*—Character is the only test, and the only true fruit, of living. It is not knowledge, for knowledge will fail. It is not money, for money cannot be carried away from earth. It is not fame, for fame's laurels fade at the grave's edge and its voice gives no cheer in the valley of shadows. It is not culture or education or refinement. It is character—not what we have or what we know, but what we *are*—that we carry with us into the eternal world. Therefore the building of character should be our central aim in all life. Business, home, church, reading, pleasure, struggle, work, sorrow—all are but means to the one end. The daily temptations which make every true life such a painful conflict from beginning to end bring us constant opportunities for growth of character. The lessons we get from others, the influences which friends exert upon us, the truths which reading puts into our minds, the impressions which life leaves upon us, the inspirations from the Divine Spirit—in all these ways the silent work of building goes on. It never ceases. The builders never rest. By day and by night the character-temple is rising. *J. R. M.*

It is not great, or special, or extraordinary experiences which constitute in the best sense the "religious character." It is the uniform daily walk with God; serving Him in little things as well as great things—in the ordinary duties and every-day avocations, as well as in the midst of grave and eventful contingencies. The spiritual life is itself the grandest illustration of the power of littles. Character is the product of hourly actions, words, and thoughts; daily forgivenesses, unselfishness, kindnesses, sympathies, charities, sacrifices for the good of others, struggles against temptation, submissiveness under trial. It is these which constitute "the man!" *Macduff.*—It is the struggle, and not the attainment, that measures character and foreshadows destiny. Character is not determined by faults and weaknesses and periodic phases of life, nor by limitations and accidents of present existence, but by the central purpose, the inmost desire of the heart. If

that be turned toward God and His righteousness, it must at last bring us thither. *T. T. Munger.*

No man really believes any more than he practises. Faith is the most abused noun in the language and believe the most abused verb. Men say they believe in Christ, who do not show the first quality of His temper. Women say they believe in love, who are exacting, selfish, vain, worldly, altogether unlovely. In religion, only that is believed which is lived. There is no Christian faith unless it makes a man a Christian, and that not in the head, but in the heart and the life. *Pres. Observer.*—Truths we sincerely and heartily believe govern our whole life. Inwrought and powerful convictions of any kind mould the character of a man whether for good or ill. Consequently, our beliefs are the real factors in our history. *Anon.*

10, 11. Encroach not upon the lands of the fatherless [the orphan], for they have a mighty Redeemer in the *Great God*—always the Father of all fatherless ones; the most formidable antagonist you *can* have. Stir not up His wrath, for He will plead and avenge their cause with thee. *H. C.*

15-35. Another continuous exhortation, in the same strain as the earlier chapters, rather than a collection of maxims. *E. H. P.*

15, 16. Beautiful outgoings of a father's heart are these! How deep are the fountains of his joy over a truly wise son! How does his very heart exult when a son's lips speak uprightly, according to truth and righteousness! We must assume that this father speaks of his *own* son!

17, 18. Be not envious toward sinners who seem to be prosperous, but abide thou permanently in thy piety—the “fear of the Lord,” comprehending piety in all its relations, involving here especially the elements of faith and trust. The Lord would say, Be not troubled by the present prosperity of the wicked; the righteous will surely have their reward in due time; if not wholly in this world, yet without fail in the world to come. Your expectation of due reward can by no means fail in the end. *H. C.*

20, 21. Our Saviour warns against surfeiting as well as intoxication. It were well to have a high standard of abstemiousness in respect to both. Whether there should be seasons of fasting or not, there should be a general habit of temperance; and the command of one appetite strengthens for a like mastery over the others. *T. C.*

The connection of pains with the violation of moral and physical law is as distinguished by

clemency as by justice, for they are intended to subserve a benevolent end. Thus the nausea, the headache, and sickness which follow the first drunken surfeit are gentle warnings to avoid that course in the future; and the debility, the delirium tremens, and the dropsy, which attend a more advanced stage of intemperance, are still louder tones of admonition to escape from the disgusting vice. Indeed, all the physical evils springing from sin are so many merciful admonitions to repentance and reformation. They are so many appeals to man's self-love, even when he is lost to every higher principle, declaiming against his vicious habits and summoning him to the path of virtue and obedience, lest iniquity be his utter ruin. And generally, this appeal of nature, though gentle at first, becomes louder and louder as the danger becomes more imminent—the tones of admonition uttered by suffering and woe consequent on vice assume a more startling and terrific cry as the rebel steps nearer the precipice of irrecoverable ruin. We ask, What principle could dictate this economy? The sinner's recovery to virtue and happiness is obviously the object, and that surely is the object of clemency and love. Punitive justice may, indeed, be manifested, but evidently in harmonious connection with tender compassion—with unbounded goodness and love. *W. Cooke.*—If before we sin we could but feel the sequences, we would never commit it; if we could but see the blindness of mind, the horror of conscience, the hardness of heart that will inseparably follow them, we would certainly shun them; for is any man so mad as to think that if a man felt the surfeit before he ate the sweetmeat, that he would then eat it? No, surely; so, could we but see the punishment now that will follow a little pleasure, surely we would reject all the pleasure. *J. Preston.*

Temperance puts wood on the fire, meal in the barrel, flour in the tub, money in the purse, credit in the country, vigor in the body, contentment in the house, clothes on the bairns, intelligence in the brain, and spirit in the constitution. *B. Franklin.*

23. *Buy*, means *acquire, obtain. Sell it not.* Prize it so highly that no consideration will induce you to part with it. The last three nouns have buy implied before them; and the description thus becomes cumulative, in order to include every species of wisdom and instruction. *M. S.*—Get hold of truth at any cost; pay its price and take it; but never sell it! Part with it for no consideration! Its value is above rubies! To expand more fully the idea em-

braced in the word "truth," he subjoins—"wisdom, instruction, understanding." Obeying this direction, we shall accumulate a vast store. H. C.

The force of the metaphor lies in this, that we cannot obtain truth without cost, and that when we have it we shall be bribed to part with it. "Buy it"—then there must be a price; "sell it not"—then there must be a temptation to let it go. J. Vaughan.

You can never overbuy it, whatsoever you give for it; you can never sell it at its value if you should have all the world in exchange for it. Solomon bids us "buy the truth," but doth not tell us what it must cost, because we must get it, though it be never so dear. We must love it both shining and scorching. Every parcel of truth is precious as the filings of gold; we must either live with it, or die for it. As Ruth said to Naomi: "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge, and nothing but death shall part thee and me" (Ruth, 1:16, 17); so must gracious spirits say, Where truth goes, I will go, and where truth lodges, I will lodge, and nothing but death shall part me and truth. A man may lawfully sell his house, land, and jewels; but truth is a jewel that exceeds all price, and must not be sold; it is our heritage. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever" (Psalms 110:111). It is a legacy which our forefathers have bought with their blood, which should make us willing to lay down anything, and to lay out anything, that we may, with the wise merchant in the Gospel, purchase the precious pearl, which is more worth than heaven and earth, and which will make a man live happy, die comfortably, and reign eternally. T. Brooks.

Buy the truth, and sell it not. Pay the price required. Buy with obedience. Buy with study. Buy with self-denial. Buy with self-sacrifice. Buy with fidelity. And know that still, whatever you pay, the truth you buy is the unpurchasable gift of God through Jesus Christ. This is the paradox of grace. You must pay everything, and then you have your prize for nothing. And lo! the prize you have found is far more glorious than the prize you sought. You sought truth, and you have found Christ. To find Christ, to agree with God in God's chief thought—the thought of Christ as Saviour and as Lord to men—this, this, at length, is orthodoxy. This truth buy. Buy, and sell it not. W. C. Wilkinson.

It is as much a moral obligation to seek for truth in our opinions as to express it in our words or to manifest it in our conduct. We are

responsible for the opinions which we form, not merely as these opinions are connected with conduct, but on the ground that the love of truth, in the whole extent and variety of its import, is an imperative and indestructible duty. This is the uniform teaching of the Scriptures. This is implied in the exhortation to buy the truth and sell it not, to seek that wisdom which is only another name for it as for hidden treasures, and to prefer its merchandise to that of gold and silver. The mind cannot move in charity nor rest in Providence unless it turn upon the poles of truth. "The inquiry of truth," says Bacon, "which is the love-making or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature. The first creature of God in the work of days was the light of sense, the last was the light of reason, and His Sabbath-work ever since is the illumination of His Spirit." Thornwell.

Wheresoever the search after truth begins, there life begins. Wheresoever that search ceases, there life ceases. Ruskin.—The noblest truths are not given to us for intellectual luxury, still less for a moral opiate of spiritual charm. They are for the inspiration of our whole being, for the hallowing and for the bracing of every power, outward and inward, with which we are endowed, and for use in the busy fields of common duty. Westcott.—There is a natural affinity between all truths and all forms of goodness. They may be separable as they are distinct; but when any one great truth is held fast, it wards off some evil influences; when any good, loving habit is retained, it keeps the heart open to truth. In the highest sphere of being truth and goodness are one, and by their commingled influence quicken and sustain the inner man. F. C. Cook.

One way in which we can continue to purchase truth is by having the eye ever open to its still developing lessons. A more direct means of the acquisition of truth will be reading, meditation, and conversation. The reproof of the wise and good, or of those in authority over us, will be a third means by which we can purchase truth for ourselves. Prayer to God becomes a constant mode of purchasing truth. E. Monro.

—The truth-seeker must be a genuinely humble man. More and more he learns how vast the treasures of truth are, how far they extend beyond the powers of his mind and the range of his knowledge. He should also be a reverent man. Having found that he himself can err, his reverence will no longer terminate upon

himself, but will be reserved for that great world of fact and reality which opens before him. He will be ready to respect any new fact, and to welcome any new light, and to accord to it its true dignity so soon as it shall be seen to be well authenticated. The truth-seeker is also a hopeful man. He believes that there is truth to be found, and that he has not found it all, else he would never become a seeker. He believes that it is right and safe to seek it, and that he will succeed in his search. He wants to know the reality of things, and is confident that an eager and earnest search will yield him more and more such knowledge. H. C. T.

He who refuses to expend effort that he may obtain this treasure, forfeits every right and title to receive the name of man; for man cannot live deprived of truth. Doubt as regards the truth from God brings darkness on our souls, distraction to our minds, and takes all comfort from our life and death. A firm conviction, on the other hand, though frequently the issue of an inward strife, produces in its turn a comforting tranquillity; and even the heavenly King could not give promise to His subjects of a higher bliss than what is pointed out in His sententious words: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." *Van O.*—How faithful and truthful is the truth which aims at our liberty and blessedness, that it takes from us step by step all false consolation, and in such a manner that though at first we do not feel thankful, yet at last we offer praise and adoration for this very discipline. *Nitzsch.*

Let no man, upon a weak conceit of sobriety, or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain that a man can search too far, or be too well studied in the Book of God's Word, or in the book of God's works—divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavor an endless progress or proficience in both. *Bacon.*—No one can comprehend all truth. The relation of disciple grows out of the vastness of truth, which is infinite like its Author. Heaven will enlarge our powers, but not exhaust the truth we study. The basis of our disciple life is here in the old, rich, fascinating revelations of scriptural truth, which point us onward by the way of the cross and in the path of loyalty to the Redeemer. *Vincent.*

Sell it not. We are bound to keep the truth for the food of our own souls, and to see that the atmosphere in which we live, and the prevailing tendencies around us, the worldliness, the selfishness, the absorption in the things seen to the exclusion of the things that are unseen

and eternal—do not rob us of the treasure which we say that we value. See to it that you keep it as what you profess that it is, the anchor of your hope and the guide of all your lives, binding it upon the palms of your hands, that all your work may be sanctified; writing it between your eyes, that all your thoughts may be enlightened; and inscribing it on the posts of your doors and your gates, that whensoever you go forth to work you may go under its guidance, and when you come back to rest and solitude you may bear it with you for your meditation and refreshment. A. M.

26. The wise man here claims the heart in the name of the Lord. Bear in mind that, although this claim is put affectionately and appealingly, it is a *claim* and admits of no compromise. God will not be put off with any minor or inferior concession. He says to every child of man, "My son, give Me thine heart." It is a very comprehensive claim, this demand of the heart. The best way to comply with it is to identify God with everything which will bear contact with Him. A life thus controlled and regulated would be indeed a blessed and a model life. Bear further in mind that God demands your heart, in order that He may enlighten, convince, pardon, sanctify, keep, dignify, and save you. *A. Mursell.*—God ever gives what He asks. It is, as Augustine beautifully expresses it, "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt;" a principle, we cannot too often repeat, applicable throughout the economy of grace, where all originates with God. A. E.

If, as the Scriptures teach, there is in the Father of spirits a disposition for communion, it follows that the same disposition should be found in the human spirit, because it was formed in the Creator's image and likeness. Or if, on the other hand, there is in man a disposition for communion, it follows that a similar disposition must dwell in the Deity. Therefore he who admits man to have been formed in God's image and likeness must admit that if a disposition for communion dwells in the spirit of the creature, it must dwell in infinite plenitude and perfection in the Creator. All spiritual religion is grafted on this disposition for communion. Under its influence the affections go out toward Him, the thoughts dwell upon Him, the soul delights in Him, and all the religious exercises of the soul are so many acts of communion with Him. And this fellowship of the created mind with the eternal and uncreated Mind is religion; the religion which God requires and commands, "My son, give Me thine

heart." In the absence of this fellowship there is no religion ; and without it the profession of religion is but formality and hypocrisy, which God despises and condemns. No external rites, no well-ordered ceremonials, no imposing pageantry, can be a substitute for this. Even morality and good works, apart from this fellowship with God, are of no avail ; so essential is communion with God to the very existence of true religion, and so expressive is God's approval of that spiritual exercise in which the soul realizes fellowship with Himself. *W. Cooke.*

Anything which makes religion the second object makes religion no object. God will put up with a great many things in the human heart ; but there is one thing He will not put up with in it—a second place. He who offers God a second place offers Him no place. *Ruskin.*—The only way is to live altogether and only to God. Thus it must be ; there is no monster in the new creation, no half-new creature ; *either all, or not at all.* We have to deal with the Maker and the Searcher of the heart in this turn, and He will have nothing unless He have the heart, and none of that neither unless He have it all. If thou pass over into His kingdom and become His subject, thou must have Him for thy only Sovereign. Loyalty can admit of no rivalry, and least of all the highest and best of all. If Christ be thy King, then His laws and sceptre must rule all in thee ; thou must now acknowledge no foreign power ; that will be treason. *Leighton.*

The personal devotion of the heart, the personal surrender of the individual will, can alone save a man or make him holy. A man's life may be influenced, but it is not determined, by his circumstances. No aid, save that which comes from above to every man, can help him to climb the mountain-path of life, or enter the wicket-gate of righteousness. Nor, on the other hand, can any will or power, except his own, retard his ascent or forbid his ingress. On ourselves, on the conscious exercise of our own free will, depends our eternal salvation or ruin. *Farrar.*—The grace of God, though sovereign in its operations, yet acts not by force and compulsion, as upon mere machines, destroying the will and dragging men to heaven, as some in contempt please to assert. No, the service of our Lord is perfect freedom. He loves a cheerful giver. Spiritual affections can only be happy from spiritual objects. The heart can only be happy in God, when cheerfully given up to Him in faith and love. This is the very essence of vital godliness. *W. Mason.*

Christ's demand is not only for the surrender

of the heart, but for the giving up of self, and, in a very profound sense, for the surrender of life. To die in and to self is the path to living in Christ. We possess ourselves only when we give ourselves away to Him. We live by dying. We die in our true selves if we seek to live for and by ourselves. He only truly lives, the motto of whose life is : " I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." *A. M.*—There is no service thoroughly right which does not directly acknowledge and honor the Saviour. The heart's offering to Him is the beginning of all righteousness. He who knoweth our frame has ordained that our spiritual life shall grow strong and earnest, just in proportion as our personal affections and faith centre in the living Saviour, who manifests the Father unto the world. We must touch His garment, sit at His feet, lean upon His cross. So we are made. We may wonder at the way, but we adore it, in our deeper experience, none the less. *F. D. H.*

27, 28. Her victims will never or almost never escape from her deadly grasp. Once in her snare, they are lost—lost to virtue, lost to happiness, lost to society, lost as to their own welfare for this world and for all worlds ! She lieth in wait *as a robber* [so the Hebrew], and she multiplieth transgressors among men. Many of the otherwise strong and mighty fall before her, never to rise again. (Compare 7 : 26, 27.) The observation of the discerning in all ages confirms the fearful truth so strongly put here, that no form of sin holds its victims with more unyielding grasp than this ; no form breaks down all self-recuperative power and hurries men to their graves more swiftly or more fearfully. *H. C.*—Of all the vices, licentiousness seems to hold men in the strongest bonds, and affords the least prospect of reformation. The fetters which it weaves around them, while they serve to bind, serve also the longer they are worn to weaken the strength of the captive, and diminish the hope that he will ever cast them asunder. No vice makes such havoc in the soul ; it is a concentration of impurity, cruelty, and contempt of both God and man ; it produces a self-loathing and abhorrence, which renders him more desperate and abandoned. At length he awakes when the enchantment is dispelled ; abused nature will have its revenge, will make a road of every nerve and vein " for the scorching feet of pain to travel on ;" and the poor wretch finds himself in the purlieus of perdition even before his spirit leaves its tenement. *J. M. M.*

29–35. (Read note on Psalm 104 : 14.) A third class of texts, the directly ethical, where

wine and its effects, instead of being incidentally mentioned, form the *principal* subject, are all one way. Among others in the Old Testament, see Prov. 23 : 29-35 ; 31 : 3 ; Isa. 5 : 11 ; 28 : 1, 3, 7, 8 ; Jer. 35 : 1, 19 ; Dan. 1 : 8 ; Hos. 4 : 2 ; Joel 1 : 5 ; Amos 6 : 6 ; Hab. 2 : 5, 15. They condemn, with no reference to excess or moderation. Wine-drinking is spoken of as a bad thing, leading to ruinous consequences. Some are more directly didactic than others. Among these stands pre-eminent Prov. 23 : 29-35. Never were the evils of wine-drinking or the danger of any incipient yielding to it more strongly set forth. For vivid painting there is nothing to equal it in all the Greek Anthologies. I give it most literally, with all its abrupt changes of number and person :

29 To whom is woe ?

To whom is ah me ?

To whom are strifes, to whom deep muttering ?

To whom are causeless wounds ?

To whom the bloodshot eye ?

30 To them who stay late at the wine ;

To them who seek the mingled drink.

31 Look not on the wine, with its ruby blush,

When it showeth its eye in the cup ;

When it walks (o'er the lips) so pleasantly.

32 At its end, like the serpent, it bites.

Like the venomous adder, it stings.

33 Strange visions thine eyes shall behold ;

Wild ravings thy heart shall utter.

34 As one who lies down in the heart of the deep ;

Who sleeps on the top of the mast.

35 They smite me, but I am not sore ;

They beat me—I feel it not.

How long till I awake,

Till I seek it yet again ? —*T. Lewis.*

29, 30. *Inspired summary of the woes of intemperance.* The whole chapter is filled with warnings against the leading forms of sensual indulgence, and earnest counsels to a temperate and virtuous life. The verses conclude these exhortations, presenting as a climax the vice of drunkenness in all its fearful aspects, as they always have been, as we see them to-day. The picture is vividly drawn throughout. In the twenty-ninth verse the ruinous results of the

vice are impressively set forth in the bold form of question, as if to compel a personal attention to this matter of greatest moment. *Woe, sorrow, contentions, complaining, wounds without cause, redness of eyes*—what a dire catalogue of human experiences flowing from a single unrestrained appetite ! Woe instead of welfare, grief in place of gladness, not to him alone that indulges, but to all associated with him. Improvidence, poverty, and want from misuse and waste of energies and means ; discomfort and desolation of heart and exhaustion of hope from loss of self-respect and social degradation—these are the familiar tokens of this woe and sorrow in the individual and the family. And more than these ; all the effects of maddened rage and strife, when inflamed passions have a wild mastery ; all the cruelties in the desolate house, the wounds anywhere given and received without just cause, and the assaults and conflicts in which life is purposely or unconsciously taken. B.—This evil to-day, this insatiate monster of intemperance, more than all else, makes misery, anguish, unhappy homes, pauperism, crime, murder, self-destruction. In the thousands of years since this sacred word came from inspiration, every year has been realized the truthfulness of this series of striking and startling questions. We speak of the horrors of war, and there are horrors in war. Carnage and bloodshed, mutilation and broken frames, widows' weeds and children's wants, enormous debt and grinding taxation, all come from war. But they fail in all their horrors compared with those that flow from intemperance. We shudder as we read of the ravages of the pestilence ; but the pestilence, like war, kills only the body, and leaves the soul unharmed. Yet to-day four hundred thousand more people are engaged in the manufacture and sale of liquors than in preaching God's word and in teaching the rising generation. And every year sixty thousand of our people march voluntarily, self-destroyed, down through a drunkard's life to the drunkard's death and grave. *Colfax.*

Isa. 5 : 11 describes the class referred to in the first part of v. 30, and forewarns of these woes. The *mixed wine* of *this* verse refers to a drugging process by which the intoxicating power is increased. The inference is that the hard drinkers of Solomon's time, *like those of our day*, sought out every means by which the diseased craving, increasing in intensity, and so demanding stronger and yet stronger stimulus, might be satisfied with a more and more fiery draught.

31. *The simple but sufficient counsel, "look*

not upon the wine." It is to be noted that no counteractive to a formed habit is hinted at, nor any *partial* indulgence allowed. Not abstinence from the taste or handling, but from the look, even the slightest glance. Its color, its sparkle in the cup, its smooth mellow flow, and its odor, these are points of tempting appeal which are to be resolutely avoided by putting them out of reach of every physical sense. And this is the only sure, safe counsel. B.—Every one feels that he would sooner sacrifice everything than take his place beside the degraded beings who seem dead to all that is noble in our nature or hopeful in our lot. These are victims that have gone blindfold to their fate. Gentle is the declivity, smooth and noiseless the descent, which conducts them, step by step, along the treacherous way, till suddenly their feet slide, and they find themselves plunging over the awful precipice. Men do not begin by what is usually called immoderate indulgence, but by that which they regard as moderate. Gradually and insensibly their draughts are increased until the functions of life are permanently disturbed, the system becomes inflamed, and there is that morbid appetite which will hardly brook restraint, and the indulgence which is sottish intemperance. Let it be remembered, then, that what is usually styled *temperate* drinking stands as the condition precedent to that which is *intemperate*. Discontinue one, and the other becomes impossible. And what is the cause of moderate drinking? Is it the force of natural appetite? Rarely. Nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths of those who use alcoholic stimulants, do it in the first instance, and often for a long time, not from appetite, but from deference to custom or fashion. They *look on the wine*. Bishop Potter.

32. *That which charms like the serpent shall sting and destroy like the serpent.* "At the last it biteth and stingeth." Not at the first. Did it bite at the first, who would tamper with it? Did the sting come at the beginning of the indulgence, who would be led astray? But the pleasure comes at the first and the sting at the last, and herein lies the danger of looking on the wine. At the first it excites mirth and song, at the last it produces sorrow and curses. At the first it is an affair of good feeling and fellowship; at the last it is an affair of feuds, fighting, and murder. At the first it may kindle up the countenance to a more animated expression; at the last it gives redness of eyes, and bloat and deformity to the visage. At the first it may quicken the intellect to unwonted activity, and impart a captivating brilliancy to

the conversation; at the last it emasculates the mind of every element of strength, and degrades the conversation to the merest stammering of idiotic gibberish. At the first it may stimulate the body to an unnatural vigor; at the last it breaks down the strongest frame, and sends weakness into the limbs and trembling into the flesh. At the first there may be health enough to resist the pernicious tendency of intoxication, so that with all the pleasures there are few of the pains of indulgence; at the last they become victims of manifold, inveterate, loathsome, and distressing diseases. At the first it is the grateful stimulus of an hour; at the last it is the "fire that never shall be quenched." *Trask.*

33-35. *Prominent features of fearful experience "at the last," tersely but vividly outlined.* Strange visions and wild ravings, the maddening sights and incoherent talk of one under the sway of delirium tremens. The image of one in the sea or upon the mast represents a senseless feeling of security while surrounded by the most imminent peril. It refers to the stupid incapacity to see or avoid danger which results from intoxication. The *moral* sense, locked up with the physical, has become steeped in utter insensibility. How hopelessly sad, how vividly terrible such a condition! And yet this surely sinking wreck of immortal humanity answers again to those who would kindly remonstrate. He derides their warnings: "I am not sick; I have no bruises; as soon as I sleep I will seek the cup again!" Thus the crazed inebriate seeks the embrace of the slayer, and sinks stupidly into the first and second death! B.

35. The picture ends with the words of the drunkard on waking from his sleep. He has been unconscious of the excesses and outrages of the night, and his first thought is to return to his old habit. **When shall I awake?** Better, omitting the interrogation, When I shall awake I will seek it yet again. E. H. P. —Half arousing from his stupor, he says, "They have stricken me, but I was not sick; they have beaten me; I felt it not. Little did I know or care, only to ask, When will this stupor be off? Then I will be to my cups again!" Oh, the appetite that is never quenched! Alas, the bands strong as death that bind the inebriate to this worse than beastly life—to this destiny of shame and woe! H. C.

Who can "*they*" be, in this most striking passage, but the phantoms of the drunkard's delirium, so graphically set forth? It is the only view that consistently accounts for the contradictory ravings, with their semi-conscious-

ness—the strange smiting that seems to leave no wound, the blows that are seen but not felt. And then this strange experience mingling with the half-dreaming utterances of his burning thirst: “Oh, when shall I awake, that I may seek it yet again?” Poor wretch, struggling in the deep waters! Who would not plunge in to save him? How many thousands like him, in every part of our country, are thus falling into hell, whatever hell may be! Who that rightly conceives it would hold back his hand from using every means—personal, social, moral, political—that may yield a hope of rescuing men from such a perdition? Abstinence, total abstinence, is the lesson, if language can convey that idea. “Do not look upon it,” my son; turn away immediately, as from a venomous serpent; think of its biting, stinging, maddenning end, and let not thine eye yield for a moment to its ruby fascination. The language of the whole passage is most urgent, reminding us of that used (Prov. 4 : 15) in respect to other tempting sins that lead to a dreadful end: “Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, pass away.” There is no other text better entitled to be regarded as the heart of the Bible doctrine in respect to wine-drinking, and its moral weight is increased by the fact of its being the teaching of the ethical Scriptures, giving, not incidental illustration, but the best known rules for the guidance of human life in this perilous world. *T. Lewis.*

Two thoughts may be usefully added. 1. All natural safeguards and restraints are one by one overthrown in the successive steps of that long process which at last makes the confirmed drunkard. The ties of natural affection, and the solicitous, provident spirit which accompanies these ties; native self-respect and desire for approbation of others; conscience, the voice of God speaking to the soul; and the very instinct that holds life itself precious; all these natural safeguards must be and are utterly trampled upon before the man can take a place below the brute. And that is the place of the inebriate, who wastes property, withers precious affections, destroys hopes, degrades character, exhausts energy and capacity, deadens the sense of duty, and obliterates from his present life the thoughts of God and judgment and an eternal being. 2. Of the Bible teachings concerning this subject thus much at least may be affirmed: “It nowhere condemns abstinence from strong drinks, nor associates God’s blessing with their use. In various ways it commends such abstinence, and exhibits the manifold evils of strong drinks. It is the first book

that proclaimed abstinence as the cure of drunkenness; and its great principle—philanthropy—enforces the practice of abstinence.” B.

Intemperance cuts down youth in its vigor, manhood in its strength, and age in its weakness. It breaks the father’s heart, bereaves the doting mother, extinguishes natural affection, erases conjugal love, blots out filial attachment, blights parental hope, and brings down mourning age in sorrow to the grave. It produces weakness, not strength; sickness, not health; death, not life. It makes wives widows, children orphans, fathers fiends, and all of them paupers and beggars. It feeds rheumatism, nurses gout, welcomes epidemics, invites cholera, imports pestilence, and embraces consumption. It covers the land with idleness, poverty, disease and crime. It fills your jails, supplies your almshouses and demands your asylums. It engenders controversies, fosters quarrels and cherishes riots. It crowds your penitentiaries and furnishes victims for your scaffolds. It is the life-blood of the gambler, the aliment of the burglar, the prop of the highwayman, and the support of the midnight incendiary. It countenances the liar, respects the thief, and esteems the blasphemer. It violates obligation, reverences fraud, and honors infamy. It defames benevolence, hates love, scorns virtue, and slanders innocence. It incites the father to butcher his helpless offspring, helps the husband to massacre his wife, and aids the child to grind the parricidal axe. It burns up man and consumes woman, detests life, curses God and despises heaven. It suborns witnesses, nurses perjury, defies the jury box and stains the judicial ermine. It bribes votes, disqualifies voters, corrupts elections, pollutes our institutions, and endangers our government. It degrades the citizen, debases the legislature, dishonors the statesman, disarms the patriot. It brings shame, not honor; terror, not safety; despair, not hope; misery, not happiness, and with the malevolence of a fiend it calmly surveys its frightful desolation, and unsatiated with havoc, it poisons felicity, kills peace, ruins morals, blights confidence, slays reputation, and wipes out national honor, then curses the world and laughs at its ruin. It does all that and more. It murders the soul. It is the sum of all villainies, the father of all crimes, the mother of all abominations, the devil’s best friend, and God’s worst enemy. *Anon.*

Suppose a man, when about to commence the

traffic in ardent spirit, should write in great capitals on his sign-board, to be seen and read of all men, *what he will do* : That so many of the inhabitants of this town or city, he will, for the sake of getting their money, make paupers and send to the almshouse, and thus oblige the whole community to support them and their families ; that so many others he will excite to the commission of crimes, and thus increase the expenses and endanger the peace and welfare of the community ; that so many he will send to the jail, and so many more to the state prison, and so many to the gallows ; that so many he will visit with sore and distressing diseases, and in so many cases, diseases which would have been comparatively harmless he will by his poison render fatal ; that in so many cases he will deprive persons of reason, and in so many cases will cause sudden death ; that so many wives he will make widows and so many children he will make orphans, and that in so many cases he will cause the children to grow up in ignorance, vice, and crime, and after being nuisances on earth will bring them to a premature grave ; that in so many cases he will prevent the efficacy of the Gospel, grieve away the Holy Ghost, and ruin for eternity the souls of men. And suppose he should put at the bottom of the sign this question : What, you may ask, can be my object in acting so much like a devil incarnate and bringing such accumulated wretchedness upon a comparatively happy people ? and under it should put the true answer, Money ; and go on to say, I have a family to support ; I want money, and must have it ; this is my business, I was brought up to it ; if I should not follow it, I must change my business, or I could not support my family. And as all faces begin to gather blackness at the approaching ruin, and all hearts to boil with indignation at its author, suppose he should add for their consolation, “ If I do not bring this destruction upon you, somebody else will.” What would they think of him ? what would all the world think of him ? what *ought* they to think of him ? And is it any worse for a man to tell the people beforehand, honestly, what he will do if they buy and use his poison, than it is to go on and do it ? And what if they are not aware of the mischief which he is doing them, and he can accomplish it through their own perverted and voluntary agency ; is it not equally abominable, if *he knows it*, and does

not cease from producing it ? *Justin Edwards.*

Speech of Lord Chesterfield. Luxury, my lords, is to be taxed, but vice *prohibited*, let the difficulty in the law be what it will. Luxury, or that which is only pernicious by its excess, may very properly be taxed, that such excess, though not strictly unlawful, may be made more difficult. But the use of those things which are simply hurtful in their own nature, and in every degree, is to be *prohibited*. None ever heard, in any nation, of a tax upon theft or adultery, because a tax implies a license granted for the use of that which is taxed, to all who are willing to pay for it. Drunkenness is universally, and in all circumstances, an *evil*, and therefore ought not to be taxed, but punished. The noble lord has been pleased kindly to inform us, that the trade of distilling is very extensive, that it employs great numbers, and that they have arrived at exquisite skill ; and therefore the trade of distilling is not to be discouraged ! Once more, my lords, allow me to wonder at the different conceptions of different understandings. It appears to me that since the spirit which the distillers produce is allowed to enfeeble the limbs, vitiate the blood, pervert the heart, and obscure the intellect, that the number of distillers should be no argument in their favor ; for I never heard that a law against theft was repealed or delayed because thieves were numerous. It appears to me that really, if so formidable a body are confederate against the virtue or the lives of their fellow-citizens, it is time to put an end to the havoc, and to interpose, while it is yet in our power, to stop the destruction. So little am I affected with the merit of that wonderful skill which distillers are said to have obtained, that it is, in my opinion, no faculty of great use to mankind to prepare *palatable poison* ; nor shall I ever contribute my interest for the reprieve of a murderer because he has, by long practice, attained great dexterity in his trade. If their liquors are so delicious that the people are tempted to their own destruction, let us at least *secure* them from their fatal draught, by bursting the vials that contain them. *Let us crush at once these artists in human slaughter, who have reconciled their countrymen to sickness and ruin, and spread over the pitfalls of debauchery such a bait as cannot be resisted !* In House of Lords, 1743.

CHAPTER XXIV.

- 1 BE not thou envious against evil men,
Neither desire to be with them :
- 2 For their heart studieth oppression,
And their lips talk of mischief.
- 3 Through wisdom is an house builded ;
And by understanding it is established :
- 4 And by knowledge are the chambers filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.
- 5 A wise man is strong ;
Yea, a man of knowledge increaseth might.
- 6 For by wise guidance thou shalt make thy
war :
And in the multitude of counsellors there is
safety.
- 7 Wisdom is too high for a fool :
He openeth not his mouth in the gate.
- 8 He that deviseth to do evil,
Men shall call him a mischievous person.
- 9 The thought of the foolish is sin :
And the scorner is an abomination to men.
- 10 If thou faint in the day of adversity,
Thy strength is small.
- 11 Deliver them that are carried away unto
death,
And those that are ready to be slain see that
thou hold back.
- 12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew not this :
Doth not he that weigheth the hearts con-
sider it ?
And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he
know it ?
And shall not he render to every man ac-
cording to his work ?
- 13 My son, eat thou honey, for it is good ;
And the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy
taste :
- 14 So shalt thou know wisdom to be unto thy
soul :
If thou hast found it, then shall there be a
reward,
And thy hope shall not be cut off.
- 15 Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the
habitation of the righteous ;
Despoil not his resting place :
- 16 For a righteous man falleth seven times, and
riseth up again :
But the wicked are overthrown by calamity.
- 17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth,
And let not thine heart be glad when he is
overthrown :
- 18 Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him,
And he turn away his wrath from him.
- 19 Fret not thyself because of evil-doers ;
Neither be thou envious at the wicked :
- 20 For there will be no reward to the evil
man ;
The lamp of the wicked shall be put out.
- 21 My son, fear thou the LORD and the king :
And meddle not with them that are given to
change :
- 22 For their calamity shall rise suddenly ;
And who knoweth the destruction of them
both ?
- 23 These also are *sayings* of the wise.
- To have respect of persons in judgment is
not good.
- 24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art
righteous ;
Peoples shall curse him, nations shall abhor
him :
- 25 But to them that rebuke *him* shall be de-
light,
And a good blessing shall come upon them.
- 26 He kisseth the lips
That giveth a right answer.
- 27 Prepare thy work without,
And make it ready for thee in the field ;
And afterwards build thine house.
- 28 Be not a witness against thy neighbour with-
out cause ;
And deceive not with thy lips.
- 29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done
to me ;
I will render to the man according to his
work.
- 30 I went by the field of the slothful,
And by the vineyard of the man void of un-
derstanding ;
- 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns,
The face thereof was covered with nettles,
And the stone wall thereof was broken
down.
- 32 Then I beheld, and considered well :
I saw, and received instruction.
- 33 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep :
- 34 So shall thy poverty come as a robber ;
And thy want as an armed man.

1, 2. THE frequent admonitions of the Scrip- 23 : 17 ; 24 : 19) against being envious of the
tures (e.g., Psalms 37 and 73 and Prov. 3 : 31 ; wicked assume that they often prosper in this

world for a season, and that we need to be reminded that a God of retributive justice has an account to settle with them except they repent, and that His favor is more to us than all earthly good can ever be. It follows that God's children never can have any good reason for being envious of the prosperity of the wicked. The special point added here is a caution against being intimate with them because their heart will plot destruction and their lips will speak evil, and consequently their social influence will be morally perilous.

3, 4. Wisdom is always useful in its application to the common business of life. It helps to build houses well, to give them a firm foundation, to furnish and to fill their chambers. Perhaps the gist of the proverb is to suggest that the same good judgment which proves itself so useful in the common matters of our external life must be worthy of our confidence and of our diligent pursuit and careful use in the greater and more vital matters of our moral and eternal life—the treasures to be garnered in “the house not made with hands.” H. C. —That which is here recommended to us as having the best influence upon our outward prosperity is *wisdom*, and *understanding*, and *knowledge*—that is, both piety toward God (for that is true wisdom) and prudence in the management of our outward affairs. We must govern ourselves in everything by the rules of religion first and then of discretion. Some that are truly pious do not thrive in the world for want of prudence, and some that are prudent do not prosper because they lean to their own understanding, and do not acknowledge God in their ways; therefore both must go together to complete a wise man. H.

7. Wisdom being *very high*, the fool cannot attain to it. Therefore he must not *open his mouth in the gate*, for there causes are tried and decided, and much wisdom is needed there. M. S.

9. Unbelief comes oftener from irreverent association than intellectual doubt. The sneer of a Voltaire has killed more than all his arguments. A jesting tone of talk on religious truths, a habit of reckless criticism on religious things, is to take the name of God in vain as truly as the vulgar oath. Intellect without reverence is the head of a man joined to a beast. There are many who think it a proof of wit; but it is the cheapest sort of wit, and shows as much lack of brains as of moral feeling. Never indulge that habit, never allow sacred things to be jested at without rebuke. There is an anecdote of Boyle that he never

pronounced the name of God without an audible pause. We need this reverence in the air of our social life, and its neglect will palsy our piety. *Washburn.*

11, 12. The more precise translation is, Deliver those who are borne toward death; oh, do thou rescue those who move on trembling toward the slaughter! For shouldst thou say, Behold, we have not known this (man), the Ponderer (Searcher) of hearts—will not He detect; the Watcher of thy soul—will not He know; and will He not requite to man as his work (may be)? The innocent and helpless are seen dragged away to their death; the voice of God comes through the inspired proverb—Rush thou to the rescue! If thou shouldst say, That man is a stranger, we know him not; of what concern is his case to us? will not the great God fathom thy selfish heart, and prove thy lying lips, and hold thee to a stern and solemn responsibility to meet the claims of our common humanity? H. C.

It is easy to escape distress, perplexity, and to flee away from the burdens of other men; but the whole word is, “Thou shalt not hide thyself” but “Thou shalt surely help him.” The proverb, “Every man must take care of himself,” has no place in the Book of God. We must take care of one another: “Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” If thou sayest, Behold, I knew it not, will not He who makes inquisition for blood bring the matter to a positive and inevitable test? Christians are not called upon to close their eyes, to run away from danger, and to lay down some narrow doctrine of *mine* and *thine*. Christianity means nothing if it does not mean the common rights of humanity; and he who fails to interpose in all cases of injustice and wrong-doing, or suffering which he can relieve, is not a Christian. J. P.—Our age needs to be reminded that in one sense each of us has the keeping of his brethren confided to him, and that love is the law and the fulfilling of the law. The rights of men to our love, to our consideration, rest upon an act of Divine love. Their chartered right to our reverence is in these terms: That God loved them and sent His Son to be the propitiation for their sins, and the Saviour set to it His seal and signed it with His blood. *Archbishop Thomson.*

It is impossible to live in this world and escape responsibility. It is not they alone who are trying purposely to convert or corrupt others who exert an influence; you cannot live

without exerting influence. The doors of your soul are open on others and theirs on you. You inhabit a house which is well-nigh transparent; and what you are within, you are ever showing yourself to be without by signs that have no ambiguous expression. Simply to be in this world, whatever you are, is to exert an influence—an influence, too, compared with which mere language and persuasion are feeble. You cannot reasonably doubt that others are continually receiving impressions from your character. As little can you doubt that you must answer for these impressions. And for what can you be held responsible, if not for this? Do not deceive yourselves in the thought that you are, at least, doing no injury, and are, therefore, living without responsibility; first make it sure that you are not every hour infusing moral death insensibly into your children, wives, husbands, friends, and acquaintances. By a mere look or glance, not unlikely, you are conveying the influence that shall turn the scale of some one's immortality. Dismiss, therefore, the thought that you are living without responsibility; that is impossible. H. B.

It is quite conceivable and perfectly capable of illustration that the mere neglect to do that which might and ought to be done in behalf of others' welfare, the *not acting at all*, may involve guilt as real though not as great, may be alike heinous in kind though not in measure, as the commission of the highest positive crimes. Indeed, nothing is more plainly disclosed in the entire Word of inspiration than the grand principle that God holds every one responsible for the good neglected which he might have done, as well as the evil he actually performs. Neglected opportunities, unused talents, undone good—these are to be arraigned at the great day in the same catalogue with boldest sins of darkest dye, according to that solemn verdict of the Judge, “Inasmuch as ye *did it not!*” Most explicitly and with exceeding fulness and force these verses introduce and state this principle. B.

Selfishness sometimes causes its subjects only to *neglect* the things of others. They do not oppress or injure or despoil; they are neither robbers nor calumniators; but they are so engrossed by self-interest and so absorbed in self-gratification as to be utterly regardless of the miseries or comfort of which they cannot but be the spectators. They have no sympathies, no benevolent sensibilities; they care nothing for the happiness of their neighbors. Their highest boast and attainment in virtue is to wrong none; their idea of excellence is purely

of a negative kind; to dispel sorrow, to relieve want, to diffuse gladness, especially to make sacrifices is an effort which they have never tried and which they have no inclination to try. The world might perish if the desolation did not reach them. They forget that they will be punished for not doing good as well as for doing evil. The *unprofitable* servant was condemned; and the wicked are represented as doomed, not for inflicting sorrow, but for not relieving it. J. A. J.

Silence is sin, if your cry might prevent a neighbor from stumbling over a precipice. Silence is sin, if neighbors are treading the broad path that leadeth to destruction, and your word might lead their steps into the way of life. Silence is sin, if a believing brother is sliding back, while your loving reproof might become to him a healing balm. Silence is sin, if a believing brother is oppressed with doubts and fears, while your lips might pour the consolations of God into his weary heart. *Arnot.*—God knows and considers whether the excuse we make be true or no; whether it was because we did not know it, or whether the true reason was not because we did not love our neighbor as we ought, but were selfish and regardless both of God and man. Let this serve to silence all our pleas by which we think to stop the mouth of conscience when it charges us with the omission of plain duty. *Does not He that ponders the heart consider it?* He will judge us accordingly. As His knowledge cannot be imposed upon, so His justice cannot be biassed, but He will *render to every man according to his works*, not only the commission of evil works, but the omission of good works. H.

15, 16. The latter of these two verses is so often carelessly but wrongly quoted as a half apology for sin, “The righteous falleth, *i.e.*, sinneth, seven times a day,” that it is necessary to put its true meaning in the clearest light possible. The Hebrew word for “falleth” is never used of falling into sin, and the teaching of the proverb is simply that men are warned not to attack or plot against the righteous. They will lose their labor, “Though the just man fall (not into sin, but into calamities), yet he riseth up.” The point of the teaching is not the liability of even good men to err, but God's providential care over them, as in Psalm 34:19. “Seven times” is, of course, a certain for an uncertain number. In contrast with this is the fate of the evil-doers, who fall utterly even in a single distress. E. H. P.—The tacit assumption here is that just men are helped to rise by their Great Protector and Defender.

“Seven,” a round for a large indefinite number, means that however often he may fall he will rise again. No such rising is to be the lot of the wicked. Their fall is to be final and fatal. H. C.

17. Sentiment: “If evils come upon a man who is your enemy, and you feel that he deserves them, do not exult in his sufferings. If thou displayest such a temper of mind, the Lord will rebuke thee by removing the cause of thine exultation.” M. S.—Charity, if it had full possession of our hearts, would not only repress all outward exhibitions of this delight, but all inward emotions; would make us dread lest an opponent should fall into sin; would not allow us to see him go unwarned to transgression, but compel us to admonish him of his danger. This is the holiness of love and the proof of a genuine hatred of sin; for if we mourn only over our own sins, or the sins of our friends or our party, there may be something selfish in our grief after all; but to mourn over iniquity, when it may in some sense promote our cause is, indeed, to hate sin for its own sake, and for the sake of Him by whom it is condemned. J. A. J.—Banish all revengeful thoughts; a spirit of revenge is the very spirit of the devil; than which nothing makes a man more like him, and nothing can be more opposite to the temper which Christianity was designed to promote. If your revenge be not satisfied it will give you torment now; if it be it will give you greater hereafter. None is a greater self-tormentor than a revengeful man who turns the poison of his own temper in upon himself. J. Mason.

19, 20. The reason assigned here against fretfulness and envy toward the wicked is that there is really nothing in their lot that should excite such feelings. Alas! they have no reward, no blessed future; their lamp of light and hope shall go out in eternal darkness! Oh, how little dost thou understand their case and their doom when thou art envious of their prosperity! Rather come and drop a tear over their mad infatuation and their bitter end! H. C.

22. *Their calamity* means the calamity which they (God and the king) inflict or send. This is made clear by the latter clause: *The destruction of them both*—that is, the destruction which both Jehovah and the king will bring on the wicked. This, *who knoweth?* i.e., no one can tell when or how it will come—it will come suddenly and unexpectedly.

27. Sentiment: “Prepare, first of all, for your necessary sustenance; accommodations

follow.” With us, in our climate, a house comes early into the list of our necessities; much less so in Palestine. The proverb: “First bread, then family,” applies well there. M. S.—The precept seems at first to be economical rather than ethical—agriculture before building, getting an estate into good order before erecting a house on it, this seems to be recommended as the true order. To “build a house” has, however, a figurative as well as a literal meaning, and may be equivalent here, as elsewhere (Ex. 1:21; Ruth 4:11), to “founding a family.” So interpreted, the words are a warning against a hasty and imprudent marriage. The young man is taught to cultivate his land before he has to bear the burdens of a family.

29. The teacher enters his protest against vindictiveness in every form, and thus foreshadows the yet higher lessons of the Sermon on the Mount. E. H. P.—*Say not, I will render to the man according to his work*, and make him pay dear for it; for it is God’s prerogative to do so, and we must leave it to Him and not step into His throne or take His work out of His hands. If we will needs be judges in our own cause, we forfeit the benefit of an appeal to God’s tribunal. H.—Personal retaliation assumes to take the administration of justice out of the hand of the Almighty, as if you could not wait His time or had no confidence in His justice. Can you hope to please God by such implied imputations against Him and by thus assuming His prerogatives? Can you suppose that He will quietly resign His throne to you that you may gratify your excited passion, or even what you suppose to be your just indignation? Remember *who* has said, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay.” H. C.

To avenge one’s self is to confess that one has been wounded; but it is not the part of a noble mind to be wounded by an injury; a great mind, and one which is conscious of its own worth, does not avenge an injury, because it does not feel it. *Seneca*.—To forgive our enemies, yet hope that God will punish them, is not to forgive enough. To forgive them ourselves, and not to pray God to forgive them, is a partial piece of charity. Forgive thine enemies totally and without any reserve, that God will revenge thee. *Browne*.

30, 31. Remarkably Solomon associates sloth with folly, as if he assumed that every sensible and wise man will be industrious and will take good care of his farm and garden. But on the grounds of the slothful, void of un-

derstanding, all is dilapidated and desolate ! H. C.—This covering over the face of his vineyard with nettles and thorns is to show what fruit the slovenly, slothful, careless professor will reap out of his profession when reaping time shall come. I beseech you. consider that the man that professeth the name of Christ and yet liveth a wicked life, is the greatest enemy that God has in the world, and consequently one that God will most eminently set His face against. *Bunyan.*

32-34. This scene affords us a symbol—at once vivid and but too truthful—of the moral ruin which comes over the soul of the spiritual sluggard. He, too, makes this the law of his

life—"A little more sleep, a little more slumber"—a little more procrastination of life's chief work, heedlessly quenching the sense of present duty, drowning his more grave convictions under the din and roar of earthly bustle ; studying evermore to be so engrossed with cares or with pleasures as never to think deeply and solemnly of God and of his own momentous responsibilities, so he sleeps and dreams life away ; but his soul, ah, how desolate of moral culture and of moral fruit unto God ! Oh, those thorns and weeds of sinful growth ; and what shall be the end thereof ? So shall thy poverty come like the mounted highwayman—they want like an armed man ! H. C.

CHAPTER XXV.

1 THESE also are proverbs of Solomon,
which the men of Hezekiah king of
Judah copied out.

2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing :
But the glory of kings is to search out a
matter.

3 The heaven for height, and the earth for
depth,
And the heart of kings is unsearchable.

4 Take away the dross from the silver,
And there cometh forth a vessel for the
finer :

5 Take away the wicked *from* before the
king,
And his throne shall be established in right-
eousness.

6 Put not thyself forward in the presence of
the king,
And stand not in the place of great men :

7 For better is it that it be said unto thee,
Come up hither ;
Than that thou shouldest be put lower in
the presence of the prince,
Whom thine eyes have seen.

8 Go not forth hastily to strive,
Lest *thou know not* what to do in the end
thereof,
When thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *him-
self*,
And disclose not the secret of another :

10 Lest he that heareth it revile thee,
And thine infamy turn not away.

11 A word fitly spoken
Is *like* apples of gold in network of silver.

12 As an earring of gold, and an ornament of
fine gold,
So is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.

13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest,
So is a faithful messenger to them that send
him ;
For he refresheth the soul of his masters.

14 As clouds and wind without rain,
So is he that boasteth himself of his gifts
falsely.

15 By long forbearing is a ruler persuaded,
And a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

16 Hast thou found honey ? eat so much as is
sufficient for thee ;
Lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

17 Let thy foot be seldom in thy neighbour's
house ;
Lest he be weary of thee, and hate thee.

18 A man that beareth false witness against his
neighbour
Is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of
trouble
Is *like* a broken tooth, and a foot out of
joint.

20 As one that taketh off a garment in cold
weather, *and as* vinegar upon nitre,
So is he that singeth songs to an heavy
heart.

21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread
to eat ;
And if he be thirsty, give him water to
drink :

22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his
head,

- And the LORD shall reward thee.
 23 The north wind bringeth forth rain :
 So doth a backbiting tongue an angry countenance.
 24 It is better to dwell in the corner of the
 housetop,
 Than with a contentious woman in a wide
 house.
 25 As cold waters to a thirsty soul,
 So is good news from a far country.

1. THE portion of the book commencing here (chaps. 25-29) was transcribed and compiled by men appointed to this service by King Hezekiah. It is of small account to us to inquire in whose keeping they had been during the period of two hundred and seventy-five years since the death of Solomon ; or why these were not introduced into the sacred canon at the same time with the earlier portions of this book. The bar to such inquiries is that we know nothing on the subject and have no means of knowing. It must suffice us to know that these proverbs were extant ; that they came to the knowledge of Hezekiah ; and that he employed suitable men to copy them and append them as we see here, to the previously compiled proverbs of Solomon. H. C.

Here the commencement of a new and later section is more distinctly set before us. "These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out." The words are very remarkable. They show the existence of a collection of proverbs already recognized as authoritative. They point to a literary activity specially busied at that period in collecting and arranging the scattered fragments of the past, either as making further extracts from the original more bulky collection, or putting into writing what had hitherto been handed down orally. And it may be noted that the section which thus opens is all but identical in character with that from 10 : 1 ; 22 : 16, which bears the heading "The Proverbs of Solomon," and which we have seen reason to regard as the kernel of the original book. The maxims are of the same length, have the same parallelism of structure, and are more or less grouped together in the same way, according to their subjects. There is the same stress laid on the ideal majesty of the kingly office, on the typical characters of the "fool," the "slothful," and the "righteous." E. H. P. —By the men of Hezekiah we are doubtless to understand his friends, who were *literary courtiers*. It matters not whether the service was performed at the king's suggestion or at theirs,

- 26 As a troubled fountain, and a corrupted
 spring,
 So is a righteous man that giveth way before
 the wicked.
 27 It is not good to eat much honey :
 So for men to search out their own glory is
 not glory.
 28 He whose spirit is without restraint
 Is like a city that is broken down and hath
 no wall.

It was an important and a very acceptable service ; and it is no wonder that such an excellent king as Hezekiah should forward such a compilation. M. S.

2. It is God's glory that His ways are unsearchable, past finding out, and that He takes none into His secret counsels to avail Himself of their wisdom, but in this sense rules the universe *alone*, in His own infinite knowledge, wisdom and love. H. C.—That "God's ways are *unsearchable*," is one of His high and awful prerogatives. "Verily He is a God who *concealeth* Himself," says Isa. 45 : 15. This deep mystery serves to make a solemn impression and to silence all impertinent inquiry. On the other hand, kings should never proceed in a hidden way, but do all by inquiry and counsel, respecting what they are called to decide. Without *searching out a matter*, in this sense, they can never decide properly. It is a king's *glory* to get all the light he can. M. S.

The concealment which God has thrown over His ways, works, and Word tends to glorify Him, as it is, in part, the necessary consequence of His infinite superiority to all finite beings in wisdom and understanding--the inevitable result of His being God. His wisdom is that which belongs to Him as the Fountain of wisdom, the Father of light, the Source of all knowledge. His purposes and designs cannot, therefore, be adequately scanned by the wisdom of men, from whom He must necessarily conceal more than He reveals. He cannot, on account of His incomparable greatness and excellence, bring His plans and operations within the comprehension of His creatures. Viewing eternity in all its extent, having present to His mind all that is past and all that is future, seeing the end from the beginning, looking forward to the remotest period and embracing in His prospect all possible future events, He regulates His conduct upon a scale which belongs only to Him that inhabits eternity. Concealment is the necessary indication and proof as well as the effect of His being "infinite in council." The judgments of such a Being

must by the necessity of His nature be to our limited apprehensions "a great deep." "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" *R. Hall.*

8. A man *hasty in strife, or easily provoked*, and who readily enters into a quarrel, if he gets *worsted* in any respect, *i.e., put to shame*, becomes so enraged that he is apt to do something desperate, either what is very wicked or is fraught with danger.

9, 10. That is, "Do not reveal secrets; for He who hears the revelation will *reproach* thee for making it; and *ill fame* will follow thee; yea, even such as will not depart from thee." *M. S.*

11. "Fitly spoken," spoken in the fitting time and wisely adapted to the circumstances. As to the precise thing to which it is here compared, critics differ, leaving us to choose between some actual fruit of gold color, served in a dish ornamented with silver; and real gold and silver, wrought into tapestry, to be suspended for ornamental purposes. In either construction the figure is beautiful, and sets forth a very beautiful scene in social life. Let him who would make social life a thing of beauty and joy study how to put in "words fitly spoken" on every opportune occasion. The original word used here I take to mean precisely, *according to the circumstances of the case.* *H. C.*

There are times when men should speak for the vindication of truth; when "words fitly spoken are like apples of gold in network of silver;" but there are more times when they should be silent. It is usually better to be silent than to engage in controversy, either oral or written. The residuum of good that comes from heated, partisan debates on disputed questions, theological, ecclesiastical, or political, is exceedingly small; while the amount of evil they have done is immeasurable. Such disputes usually degenerate into "strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings and evil surmisings." Silence is golden when you are angry; for, if you speak then, you will be sure to say what you will regret afterward. But if you keep still until your passion is gone, you can speak more justly, more plainly and with better effect than you could speak in anger. *Zimmerman.*

12. The man who administers reproof wisely, tenderly, to one who opens his ear and his heart thankfully to hear and to profit thereby, are next compared to the finest ornament of gold

—a scene in the social and moral world the beauty of which Solomon had an eye to see, a heart to appreciate, and a pen to describe with exquisite charm. Such moral culture, such winning ways to draw the young from folly to wisdom, are indeed more angelic than any ornament of fine gold can avail to represent.

13. Ice-water in a hot summer day gives us the true sense of this figure. So is a reliable messenger to his employers. They can trust him, and they are refreshed by his fidelity to his trust. *H. C.*

14. The comparison is very striking and the sentiment pungent. Clouds and wind sometimes promise rain, and do not give it; so the boasting man promises, and perhaps parades, his so-called gifts; but he does not bestow them.

15. Meaning: "Forbearance and gentleness have great power in subduing self-will and obstinate persistence in wrong-doing." *M. S.*

16. In Palestine honey was found wild and eaten naturally in large quantities by hungry men. Hence the temptation to excess, and hence this caution, the spirit of which should pass over to every form of animal indulgence. In the hour of abundance and in the face of its temptations guard against excess. The reaction of abused nature is by no means comfortable. *H. C.*—The goodness of God, which hath made our complex constitution, our many-sided manhood, so marvellously capable of pleasure, hath made bountiful provision for full satisfaction and delight. In all true physical delights the Christian finds honey; and to him the good God says, "Hast thou found honey? Eat it." *Wray.*—What the Bible forbids is excess in the use of pleasure, untimely pleasures, and pleasures that arise from sin or that lead to sin. The prohibition of such pleasures proceeds upon a principle of benevolence. There is a point at which pleasure becomes pain. It is the law of our being that if pleasure is to remain pleasure, it must be enjoyed moderately and intermittently. *J. P.*

17. *Be not too intimate with any.* He that sponges upon his friend loses him. How much better a Friend, then, is God than any other friend; for we withdraw not our foot from His house, the throne of His grace; the oftener we come to Him the better and the more welcome.

18. The sin condemned is *bearing false witness against our neighbor*, either in judgment or in common conversation, contrary to the law of the ninth commandment. That which it is here condemned for is the mischievousness of it; it is in its power to ruin not only men's

reputation, but their lives, estates, families, all that is dear to them. H.

Maul, sword, sharp arrow. None of these death-weapons is more terrible than the false and slanderous tongue, perjuring itself in order to ruin a neighbor in the vital issues of a trial before the courts of justice. Slander anywhere, under any circumstances, is a death-weapon wielded against a man's good name. H. C.—It is the false tongue and the lying lip which there is no fence against. When that is the weapon, a man may strike where he cannot reach; and a word shall do execution both farther and deeper than the mightiest blow. *South.*

19. Meaning: A treacherous man will not only fail you in a time of distress, but will annoy you like a broken tooth or a sprained foot. M. S.

20. Two examples of un wisdom and incongruity are brought together to sharpen the point of the proverb against that of which the third clause speaks, that of putting off a garment when it is most needed; that of pouring vinegar upon nitre or potash, and so utterly spoiling it. The effervescence caused by the mixture is perhaps taken as a type of the irritation produced by the "songs" sung out of season to a heavy heart. E. H. P.

21. By this it appears that, however the scribes and Pharisees had corrupted the law, not only the commandment of loving our brethren, but even that of loving our enemies, was not only a new, but an old commandment; an Old Testament commandment, though our Saviour has given it us with the new enforcement of His own great example in loving us when we were enemies. H.

22. Means, *For in this way* thou wilt heap coals, etc. The specification of bread to your enemy when hungry, water when thirsty, of course represents any and every act of kindness and love. The sentiment is, Love your enemies and *show it by doing them good.* The figure requires us to think of the effect of kindness, as shown by a man to his enemy, and not of any retribution from God upon him. See how Paul (Rom. 12 : 20) cites and uses this passage. Dismiss (says he) all thought of vengeance; leave vengeance to God alone, and turn thine heart wholly to kindness: so shalt thou overcome evil with good. Our Lord has the same doctrine in its comprehensive form (Matt. 5 : 44): "Love your enemies," etc. The same doctrine of morality, the same law of love, appears in both the Old Testament and the New. A sublimely glorious doctrine indeed! H. C.

Has any one permitted himself to make use of injurious expressions respecting you? Reply to him by blessings. Does he treat you ill? Be patient. Does he reproach you? Is the reproach just? If it be, condemn yourself; if not, it is but a breath of air. Flattery could not really impart a merit to you if you have it not; nor calumny give you faults that you do not actually possess. Does he tax you with ignorance? In showing yourself angry you justify the charge. Does he persecute you? Think of Jesus Christ. Can you ever suffer as He has suffered! *Basil.*

25. The words remind us of the scanty intercourse in the old world between wanderers and the home they had left. The craving for tidings in such a case might be as a consuming thirst, the news that quenched it as a refreshing fountain. E. H. P.

26. Oriental travellers are often sadly disappointed to find the fountain in the desert, which they have travelled far to reach "troubled" and "corrupted"—tramped and fouled—by the feet and the offal of camels, asses—every animal of the desert. Having hoped for pure, wholesome water, they look with sad and sinking heart upon this loathsome mass. Such is the spectacle when a righteous man succumbs before the wicked. H. C.—For the righteous to be cowardly, to truckle to the wicked, to be afraid of opposing his wickedness and basely to yield to him, this is a reflection upon religion, a discouragement to good men, and strengthens the hands of sinners in their sins, and so is like a *troubled fountain* and a *corrupt spring.* H.

Oh, professors, look to your steps—the devil desires to make use of you for evil purposes! The sins of others, who make no profession of godliness, will never so fit his purpose for the blinding of men's eyes, as the least slip or failing of yours will do. It is the living bird that makes the best snare to draw others into the net. The grossest wickedness of profane sinners passes away in silence, but all the neighborhood shall ring with your miscarriages. "A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring." The scandalous falls of good men are like a bag of poison cast into the spring from whence the whole town is supplied with water. You little know what mischief you may do. *Flavel.*

Profession without practice makes us to resemble the stony ground, which brought forth a green blade, but no fruit to due maturity; like the fig-tree, which, having leaves but no

figs, was accursed ; like the tree in the garden, which, cumbering the ground with its fruitless presence, was threatened to be cut down ; like glowworms, which have some lustre but no heat—seeing such professors shine with some light of knowledge, but without all warmth of Christian charity. *Downname.*—The Christian's character must harmonize with his profession, if he would have his testimony to the power of Christ weighty and influential. The man who is known to have been sick, and to have been to the physician, speaks of the power of the physician without saying a word, simply by being seen to be in health. He is a living, walking witness, and cannot but testify to all who see him. So is the recovered sinner, the Christian convalescent. And every recovered Christian, by his life, ought to speak as loudly. *Champneys.*

27. The first clause declares that we may have too much of a good thing, so that it becomes virtually an evil to us. As for the second ; *glory, i.e.,* an honorable name, is a good thing ; but to seek after this as an object and with solicitude is “ not good.” M. S.

28. The wise and virtuous man is one that has rule over his own spirit, maintains the gov-

ernment of himself and of his own appetites and passions, and does not suffer them to rebel against reason and conscience. He has the rule of his own thoughts, his desires, his inclinations, his resentments, and keeps them all in good order. The man who has not this rule over his own spirit, who when temptations to excess in eating or drinking are before him has no government of himself, when he is provoked breaks out into exorbitant passions, such a one is *like a city that is broken down, and without walls* ; all that is good goes out and forsakes him, all that is evil breaks in upon him. H.

The great principle and foundation of all virtue is placed in this, that a man is able to deny himself his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way ; as the strength of the body lies chiefly in being able to endure hardships, so also does that of the mind. *Locke.*—The habit of self-control is but the accumulation of continued acts of self-denial ; it is but the repeated authority of the reason over the impulses, of the judgment over the inclinations, of the sense of duty over the desire. *Anon.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

- 1 As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest,
So honour is not seemly for a fool.
- 2 As the sparrow in her wandering, as the
swallow in her flying,
So the curse that is causeless lighteth not.
- 3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass,
And a rod for the back of fools.
- 4 Answer not a fool according to his folly,
Lest thou also be like unto him.
- 5 Answer a fool according to his folly,
Lest he be wise in his own conceit.
- 6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a
fool
Cutteth off *his own* feet, and drinketh in
damage.
- 7 The legs of the lame hang loose :
So is a parable in the mouth of fools.
- 8 As one that bindeth a stone in a sling,
So is he that giveth honour to a fool.
- 9 As a thorn that goeth up into the hand of a
drunkard,
So is a parable in the mouth of fools.
- 10 As an archer that woundeth all,

- So is he that hireth the fool and he that
hireth them that pass by.
- 11 As a dog that returneth to his vomit,
So is a fool that repeateth his folly.
- 12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit ?
There is more hope of a fool than of him.
- 13 The sluggard saith, There is a lion in the
way ;
A lion is in the streets.
- 14 As the door turneth upon its hinges,
So doth the sluggard upon his bed.
- 15 The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish ;
It wearith him to bring it again to his
mouth.
- 16 The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit
Than seven men that can render a reason.
- 17 He that passeth by, and vexeth himself with
strife belonging not to him,
Is *like* one that taketh a dog by the ears.
- 18 As a madman who casteth firebrands,
Arrows, and death ;
- 19 So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour,
And saith, Am not I in sport ?

- 20 For lack of wood the fire goeth out :
And where there is no whisperer, contention
ceaseth.
- 21 As coals are to hot embers, and wood to fire ;
So is a contentious man to inflame strife.
- 22 The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels,
And they go down into the innermost parts
of the belly.
- 23 Fervent lips and a wicked heart
Are *like* an earthen vessel overlaid with silver
dross.
- 24 He that hateth dissembleth with his lips,

- But he layeth up deceit within him :
- 25 When he speaketh fair, believe him not ;
For there are seven abominations in his
heart :
- 26 Though *his* hatred cover itself with guile,
His wickedness shall be openly shewed be-
fore the congregation.
- 27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein :
And he that rolleth a stone, it shall return
upon him.
- 28 A lying tongue hateth those whom it hath
wounded ;
And a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

2. "THE birds swiftly vanish ; and so does the causeless curse—*i.e.*, it will not light." This is the gist of the comparison. M. S.—Vague as the flight of the sparrow, aimless as the wheelings of the swallow, is the causeless curse. It will never reach its goal. *Anon.*

3. Fitness is here the one point in common. The horse needs the whip, the ass the bridle, and the fool's back, for the same reason, the rod of correction. It is assumed that by reason of his folly the persuasions of wisdom and the law of kindness are unavailing, so that nothing remains but the rod. H. C.

4, 5. Both are correct, with appropriate limitations. In the first case, one is *not to answer a fool* in a way that accords with his folly—*i.e.*, by saying silly things as he does ; for this would make one turn fool himself. In the second place, *one should answer him as his folly deserves*—*i.e.*, with reproof, or (it may be) with a wise moderation ; for otherwise he will indulge the conceit, that he himself is as wise as others. M. S.—The true sense of this pair of proverbs : Answer not the fool *foolishly*, according to the *spirit* of his folly, lest thou become like him. But answer a fool *as his folly deserves*, according to the *desert* of his folly, lest he be left to suppose that he has said a very smart thing and become even more wise in his own conceit than ever before. Rebuke him ; expose his folly to his own eyes ; but beware of being drawn by sympathy into the same strain of foolish talking.

8. The pith of the proverb : Honor will not stick to a fool. It can no more abide with him than a smooth stone will abide in the sling when the hurling impulse is felt tearing it away.

12. Self-conceit is a more fatal bar to knowledge and true wisdom than ignorance or even stupidity. He who thinks himself wise enough already scorns all diligent application and real study. H. C.—There is no greater evidence of a man's weakness than self-conceit, and it is

well said of such "there is more hope of a fool than of him." The more a man knows, the more fully he is conscious of his deficiencies, and the more humble and unassuming he will be. Men who seek for recognition are seldom worthy of it, while men whose worth entitles them to recognition have no need to seek for it.

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," but "the lofty look of man shall be brought low." *Meth. Recorder.*

It was prettily devised of Æsop, the fly set upon the axletree of the chariot-wheel, and said, "What a dust do I raise !" So are there some vain persons that, whatsoever goeth alone, or moveth upon greater means, if they have never so little hand in it, think it is they who carry it. They who write books on the contempt of glory inscribe their own name on the titles. Vainglorious men are the scorn of wise men, the admiration of fools, the idols of parasites, and the slaves of their own vaunts. *Bacon.*

The conceited man has only one ardent admirer—that is himself. No trait of character conveys a more unfavorable impression ; none so quickly excites disgust ; none provokes such constant and universal ridicule. Conceit is a mark of real smallness of soul. It is a phase of selfishness. It means small thoughts of the world and of other men ; low ideals of character and attainment ; weak and narrow conceptions of duty. It is the mark of a self-centred life ; and the life which makes self the centre is as much smaller than the true life as the idea which made our earth the centre of the universe was beneath the true conception of the solar system. "Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works," said Shakespeare. The men who have been servants of humanity—the great reformers and philanthropists—have been free from conceit. They were great in humility ; for humility, rightly understood, is essential greatness. Humility is the quality which leads

men to serve others ; conceit, the quality which leads them to serve themselves. S. S. T.

Than self-conceit nothing operates more powerfully in perverting the judgment, that guiding faculty by whose ministry alone we may render all the others serviceable. The vain man can never think justly of things nor equitably of persons, where his vanity has any or the least concern, which it seldom fails to have in most cases occurring for his decision. It throws a bar against improvement by the persuasion of a sufficiency already attained ; it shuts his ear against information and his heart against conviction, lest he should appear ever to have been wanting in knowledge, or liable to mistake. It prevents all self-examination, for fear he should find something that might wound his vanity ; it renders him indocible of that most useful science of ignorance ; for he knows of none within him to be the object of such science. It falsifies the weights and measures of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, laudable and blamable, making him judge of them according to what he has or does, or believes, himself exaggerating his own and depreciating whatever belongs to another. It damps his industry by the disdain of little acquisitions as unworthy his notice. The conceited will stoop to nothing that is not grand, extraordinary ; he must preside at the helm, or convert heathen nations, or draw multitudes at his heels, or knock down all opposers with demonstration ; and if by scorning to do anything common he undertakes nothing feasible, he solaces himself with reflecting what mighty wonders he should have performed if such or such perverse incidents had not fallen in the way. *Anon.*

Of all trees, God hath chosen the vine, a low plant that creeps upon the helpful wall ; of all beasts, the soft and patient lamb ; of all fowls, the mild and guileless dove. When God appeared to Moses, it was not in the lofty cedar, nor in the sturdy oak, nor in the spreading palm ; but in a bush, a humble, slender, abject shrub ; as if He would by these elections check the conceited arrogance of man. *Anon.*

13. *The slothful man* dreads the way, the streets, the place where work is to be done, and a journey to be gone ; he hates business, hates everything that requires care and labor. He pretends to dread *a lion in the way*. When he is pressed to be diligent, either in his worldly affairs or in the business of religion, this is his excuse (and a sorry excuse it is, as bad as none), *There is a lion in the way*, some insuperable difficulty or danger which he cannot pretend to

grapple with. Lions frequent woods and deserts ; and in the daytime, when man has business to do, they are in their dens. But the sluggard pretends to fancy *a lion in the streets*, whereas the lion is only in his own fancy, nor is he so fierce as he is painted. It is a foolish thing to frighten ourselves from real duties by fancied difficulties. H.

“ *There is a lion in the way.*” Yes, and not one but many lions : the lion of the world’s opposition and hatred ; the lion of our own fleshly nature, of our own physical and mental passions ; our “adversary the devil.” These lions—the world, the flesh, and the devil—for all their seeming strength and ferocity and the passion in their throats, prove but cowardly beasts after all ; and though Timorous and Mistrust may not find it out, they are but chained lions, and we stand beyond their spring. But the slothful man not only says, “ *There is a lion in the way,*” but adds, “ *I shall be slain in the streets,*” and then in a reproachful and injured tone, “ *You well know that many have been so slain.*” Yes, it is quite true ; they have been so slain ; but to them, as to their Lord, through death and after death, if not in life, have come the glory and the victory. *Farrar.*

14. As the door, with no self-moving power, turns not itself but only *is* turned, so the slothful may be sarcastically represented as too lazy (of his own motion) even to turn over in his bed. Or perhaps the point of the comparison may be that as the door can have no other motion than that of turning to and fro upon its hinges, so the sluggard never moves beyond rolling from side to side upon his bed—never rises to any active, useful labor. These proverbs spare not the sluggard ! H. C.

16. The object of a *liberal education* is to develop the whole mental system of man—to make his speculative inferences coincide with his practical convictions—to enable him to render a reason for the belief that is in him, and not to leave him in the condition of Solomon’s sluggard, who is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that *can* render a reason. *Whewell.*

19. He that sins in jest must repent in earnest, or his sin will be his ruin. Truth is too valuable a thing to be sold for a jest, and so is the reputation of our neighbor. By lying and slandering in jest men learn themselves and teach others to lie and slander in earnest ; a false report raised in mirth may be spread in malice ; and if a man may tell a lie to make himself merry, why not to make himself rich, and so *truth quite perishes*, and men *teach their tongues to tell lies* (Jer. 9 : 5). If men would

consider that a lie comes from the devil and brings to hell-fire, surely that would spoil the sport of it ; it is *casting arrows and death* to themselves.

20-22. Contention is as a fire, it heats the spirit, burns up all that is good, and puts families and societies into a flame. Here we are told how that fire is commonly kindled and kept burning, that we may avoid the occasions of strife, and so prevent the mischievous consequences of it. If then we would keep the peace, we must not give ear to *talebearers*, for they feed the fire of contention with fuel ; nay, they spread it with combustible matter ; the tales they carry are fire-balls ; they who by insinuating base characters, revealing secrets, and misrepresenting words and actions, do what they can to make relations, friends and neighbors jealous one of another, alienate them one from another and sow discord among them, are to be banished out of families and all societies, and then strife will as surely cease as the fire will go out when it has no fuel ; the contenders will better understand one another and come to a better temper ; old stories will soon be forgotten when there are no new ones told to keep up the remembrance of them, and both sides will see how they have been imposed upon by a common enemy. Whisperers and backbiters are incendiaries not to be suffered. To illustrate this, he repeats (v. 22) what he had said before (18 : 8), that *the words of a talebearer are as wounds*, deep and dangerous wounds, wounds in the vitals ; they wound the reputation of him who is belied, and perhaps the wound proves incurable, and even the plaster of a recantation

(which yet can seldom be obtained) may not prove wide enough for it ; they wound the love and charity which he to whom they are spoken ought to have for his neighbor, and give a fatal stab to friendship and Christian fellowship. We must therefore not only not be talebearers ourselves at any time, nor ever do any ill offices, but we should not give the least countenance to those that are. H.

27. This implies that he digs a pit for others to fall into, and rolls a stone up the hill to hurl it down upon other men's heads. His malicious labor reacts with curses upon himself. Haman thought to build a gallows for Mordecai ; by God's overruling hand it came to pass that he built it for his own neck. H. C.

28. There are two sorts of lies equally detestable : 1. A slandering lie, which avowedly hates those it is spoken of ; *a lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it* ; it afflicts them by calumnies and reproaches because it hates them, and can thus smite them secretly where they are without defence ; and it hates them because it has afflicted them, and made them its enemies. The mischief of this is open and obvious ; it afflicts, it hates, and owns it, and everybody sees it. 2. A flattering lie, which secretly *works the ruin* of those it is spoken to. In the former, the mischief is plain, and men guard against it as well as they can, but in this it is little suspected, and men betray themselves by being credulous of their own praises and the compliments that are passed upon them. A wise man therefore will be more afraid of a flatterer that kisses and kills than of a slanderer that proclaims war. H.

CHAPTER XXVII.

- 1 BOAST not thyself of to-morrow ;
For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth
- 2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth ;
A stranger, and not thine own lips.
- 3 A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty ;
But a fool's vexation is heavier than them both.
- 4 Wrath is cruel, and anger is overwhelming ;
But who is able to stand before jealousy ?
- 5 Better is open rebuke
Than love that is hidden.

- 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend :
But the kisses of an enemy are profuse.
- 7 The full soul loatheth an honeycomb :
But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.
- 8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest,
So is a man that wandereth from his place.
- 9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart :
So doth the sweetness of a man's friend *that cometh* of hearty counsel.
- 10 Thine own friend, and thy father's friend,
forsake not ;
And go not to thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity :

- Better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.
- 11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad,
That I may answer him that reproacheth me.
- 12 A prudent man seeth the evil, *and* hideth himself :
But the simple pass on, *and* suffer for it.
- 13 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger ;
And hold him in pledge *that is surety* for a strange woman.
- 14 He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice,
rising early in the morning,
It shall be counted a curse to him.
- 15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day
And a contentious woman are alike :
- 16 He that would restrain her restraineth the wind,
And his right hand encountereth oil.
- 17 Iron sharpeneth iron ;
So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.
- 18 Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof ;
And he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.
- 19 As in water face *answereth* to face,
So the heart of man to man.
- 20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied ;
And the eyes of man are never satisfied.
- 21 The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold,
And a man is *tried* by his praise.
- 22 Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar with a pestle among bruised corn,
Yet will not his foolishness depart from him.
- 23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
And look well to thy herds :
- 24 For riches are not for ever ;
And doth the crown endure unto all generations ?
- 25 The hay is carried, and the tender grass sheweth itself,
And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in.
- 26 The lambs are for thy clothing,
And the goats are the price of the field :
- 27 And *there will be* goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household ;
And maintenance for thy maidens.

1. IN this proverb "*boast*" is the expressive word. Do not proudly assume that to-morrow is your own, so that you may claim and use it as you will with no recognition of God as the great Owner and really the Giver to mortals of all their earthly days. If even to-morrow—only one day onward—is not our own, how much less the days that lie still more remote in the future. The Apostle James (4 : 13-16) seems to have had this proverb in mind, "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city," etc. "But now ye rejoice in your *boastings*," etc., these *boastings* being manifested in their plans for the future, which left out all thought of God and assumed to have an absolute control of future days and circumstances as their own. H. C.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow, much less of many days or years to come. This does not forbid *preparing for* to-morrow, but *presuming upon* to-morrow. We must not promise ourselves the continuance of our lives and comforts till *to-morrow*, but speak of it with submission to the will of God, and as those who with good reason are kept at uncertainty about it. H.—**A day.** Every day is a little life ; and our whole life is but a day repeated. Those, therefore, that dare lose a day are dan-

gerously prodigal ; those that dare misspend it, desperate. *Bishop H.*

We are largely indebted to the unexpectedness of events for all that makes life worth living. This unexpectedness adds immeasurably to our happiness, both by what it saves us from and by what it bestows. It is no fiction that the severest trials and heaviest sorrows are more grievous in the anticipation than in the endurance. The cup, when it is put to our lips, is mingled for us with reliefs, consolations, hopes. And as to positive enjoyment, it is very certain that we derive more happiness from imagination than from experience. The vision, when realized, has lost its roseate hue, its silver lining, its fringes of gold. We borrow from the future much more than it will ever pay. So, too, the uncertainty of the future is a needed and perpetual stimulus in all healthful activity and enterprise. Were our lives mapped out before us, how tame would life be, how circumscribed its endeavors, how crippled its energies ! The certain, the inevitable—how passively should we wait its treasured goods, how sullenly submit to its privations and calamities ! *A. P. Peabody.*

2. Self-praise is specially liable to fail of its object. As a general rule it is better for one's

reputation to forego praise altogether than to attempt to furnish it for one's self—the reason of which is not far to seek. H. C.—Praise not thy work, but let thy work praise thee ; for deeds, not words, make each man's memory stable. If what thou doest is good, its good all men will see. Musk by its smell is known, not by its label. *Saadi*.

Even when we are working for God, there is a constant temptation to do good things to be seen of men, or to hear the pleasant voice of human praise. It requires a very careful watch over the heart to keep self out. *Anon.*—Whenever men delight to talk of themselves, it is to be suspected that pride and vanity direct them to the choice of the subject, though it may appear perhaps in the disguise of meekness and humility. The rule of prudence and the rule of virtue are coincident, that the less we talk of ourselves the better ; it is a nice theme, and few enter on it who come off clear either of folly or sin. *Bishop Sherlock*.

It would be impossible to trace this Proteus passion of vanity through its innumerable forms—habits of depreciating others to gratify ourselves secretly by the contrast ; self-complacent thoughts and imaginations ; the general effort for display ; the traps laid for praise, and concealed often under an affected humility ; the whispering voice within commending all we do, and elating us even in silence and solitude with an exhilarating sense of our own merit. J. J.

Since virtuous actions have their own trumpets, and without any noise from thyself will have their resound abroad, busy not thy best member in the encomium of thyself. Praise is a debt we owe unto the virtues of others, and due unto our own from all whom malice hath not made mutes or envy struck dumb. Fall not, however into the common prevaricating way of self-commendation and boasting by denoting the imperfections of others. He who discommendeth others obliquely commendeth himself. He who whispers their infirmities proclaims his own exemption from them, and consequently says, I am not as this publican whom I talk of. Open ostentation and loud vainglory is more tolerable than this obliquity, as but consisting of a personal piece of folly, not complicated with uncharitableness. Superfluously we seek a precarious applause abroad ; every good man hath his *plaudite* within himself, and though his tongue be silent is not without loud cymbals in his breast. Conscience will become his panegyrist and never forget to crown and extol him unto himself. *Browne*.

Let another praise. There are frequent occasions when an encouraging word would be of more real value than the richest material gift. Some persons are far too much afraid of the effect of a little generous and well-timed praise. They would keep all their flowers in an ice-house. Letting in a little sunshine upon them at times would not be amiss. How lavish was the wise and large-hearted Paul with his words of commendation, whenever they could be honestly spoken or written ! *A. Thomson.*—Judicious praise is both right and useful. There are families in which it would do a world of good. There are faithful wives whose fidelity their husbands appreciate, but they neglect to tell them so. There are children who, if not better, would be happier if their parents cheered them now and then with a hearty “well done.” There are excellent ministers who would preach better and be better pastors if their people were more like the lord in the parable. Many of us may learn a lesson that we greatly need from the Divine words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” *Interior.*—There is comfort and help through sincere and hearty praise which comes from one who knows us through and through, and who is still able to delight in us because of what we want to be. There is comfort and help through intelligent and discriminating praise which shows a sympathetic appreciation of our best endeavors idealward. There is only discomfort to any true man or woman in any other praise than this. And here is a distinction which should be in our minds in all giving or receiving of praise. S. S. T.

4. Both *wrath* and *anger* are fraught with evil which is hard to be borne, but much worse still is the passion of *jealousy*. M. S.—I take the word to mean *jealousy*, in the specific form which this author portrays so vividly (6 : 34, 35). When either party to the marriage bond becomes jealous of the other, and the warmest and most sacred sensibilities known to the human heart are outraged, who can stand before their fury ? H. C.

5, 6. Let him that reproves do it with words of meekness and commiseration. Let the reprehension come not as a dark shot at the offender's person, but at his fault. Let a man reprehend so that it may appear that he wishes that he had no cause to reprehend. *South.*—The friend who conceals not my faults, warns me kindly, reproves me affectionately, when I have not performed my duty, he is my friend, however little he may appear so. Again, if a man praises and lauds me, never reproves me, over-

looks my faults and forgives them before I have repented, he is my enemy, however much he may appear my friend. *Herder*.—True friendship necessarily requires patience; for there is no man in whom I shall not mislike somewhat, and who shall not as justly mislike somewhat in me. My friend's faults, therefore, if little, I will swallow and digest; if great, I will smother them; however, I will wink at them to others; but lovingly notify them to himself. *Bishop II*.

6. The point of comparison here is that of *wounds* on the one hand by a friend, and *kisses* on the other by a secret enemy. A friend, open and ingenuous, admonishes and reproves for our good; but an enemy bestows nothing but *kisses often repeated*, that he may render his victim unsuspecting and unguarded, and so strike the surer blow. M. S.

7. The special instance covers the general law that indulgence in pleasure of any kind brings on satiety and weariness, that self-restraint multiplies the sources of enjoyment. E. H. P.—“The crime of sense is avenged by sense which wears with time;” for it has been well remarked that the terrific punishment attached to the habitual indulgence of the senses is, that the incitements to enjoyment increase in proportion as the power of enjoyment fades. Experience at last forbids even the hope of enjoyment; the sin of the intoxicated soul is loathed, detested, abhorred; yet it is done. The irritated sense, like an avenging fury, goads on with a restlessness of craving, and compels a reiteration of the guilt though it has ceased to charm. F. W. R.

9. As oil, pleasantly scented, and perfume are grateful to the sense of smell, so is the sweetness of friendship, manifested by affectionate hearty counsels. Good advice, such as manifestly comes up from the depths of a loving heart, is the sweetness of friendship, corresponding to the fragrance of sweet odors. H. C.—There is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer; for there is no such flatterer as is a man's self, and there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self as the liberty of a friend. *Bacon*.

Friendship hath the skill and observation of the best physician; the diligence and vigilance of the best nurse; and the tenderness and patience of the best mother. *Clarendon*.—The communicating of a man's self to his friend works two contrary effects, for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in halves; for there is

no man that imparteth his joys to his friend, but he joyeth the more, and no man that imparteth his griefs to his friend, but he grieveth the less. *Bacon*.

We can converse frequently with nothing, but it is insensibly assimilating us to its own predominant quality. Men are apt to be changed for the better or worse, according to the conditions of them with whom they daily converse; the election therefore of our companions is one of the weightiest actions of our lives, our future good or hurt dependeth so much upon it. It is an excellent speech of Chrysostom: If men, good or bad, be joined together in a special band of society, they either quickly part or usually become alike. *Swinnock*.

A Christian should always be giving good or taking good, and that company is not for him that will neither give nor take this. What should a merchant do where there is no buying or selling? *Gurnall*.—Birds of a feather will flock together. Servants of the same Lord, if faithful, will join with their fellows, and not with the servants of His enemy. A Christian, before his conversion, walks in company with men of the world; but when the Spirit changes his disposition, he quickly changes his companions, and delights only in the “saints that are on earth.” *Swinnock*.

The pleasures resulting from the mutual attachment of kindred spirits are by no means confined to the moments of personal intercourse; they diffuse their odors, though more faintly, through the seasons of absence, refreshing and exhilarating the mind by the remembrance of the past and the anticipation of the future. It is a treasure possessed when it is not employed; a reserve of strength, ready to be called into action when most needed; a fountain of sweets, to which we may continually repair, whose waters are inexhaustible. *R. Hall*.—If the converse of one friend, at one interview, gives comfort and strengthens our hearts, what may not be expected from the continual supports, daily visits, and powerful love of the Saviour of sinners, the covenanted Friend of believers! *T. Scott*.—In pure amity there is a threefold union: a union of resemblance, that is the principle of it; likeness causes love: a union of affection, that is its essence; it is said of Jonathan, that incomparable friend, “his soul was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul;” the union of conversation, that is requisite to the satisfaction of love. What an entertainment of love and joy is there in the presence

and discourses of dear friends ! their mutual aspects, like a chain composed of spirits luminous and active, draw and fasten their souls to one another ; the felicity of love consists in their conversation. Now in heaven, whatever is pleasant in friendship is in perfection ; and whatever is distasteful by men's folly and weakness is abolished. With what excellent discourses do they entertain one another ? Certainly in heaven the blessed with overflowing affections recount the Divine benefits ; the admirable methods whereby the life of grace was begun preserved and carried on amid temptations ; the continual succession of mercies in the time of their hopes, and the consummation of all in the time of their enjoyment. *Bates.*

10. Sentiment : " Only long-tried friends are to be trusted, above all in a calamitous time. Even the ties of consanguinity are not always to be relied on." *M. S.*—Friends and friendship are choice possessions ; and better, says Solomon, with terse brevity, in the day of calamity, is a neighbor that is near than a brother that is far off. No man can be called poor who has loyal hearts to love him. No man can be called rich, if he have not so borne himself in his commerce with his kind, that he has drawn around him a cordon of the tender, the steadfast, the devoted, and the unselfish, of those who have touched his hand and heard his voice. *Anon.*

11. The key to the last clause lies in the fact that society holds the father in a great measure responsible for the morals of his son, and therefore if he has not done his parental duty will reproach him for his neglect and failure. Hence Solomon says, Remember, my son, that my good name as well as yours is at stake, pending upon the life you live ; therefore *be wise* ; so shall my heart be glad and your wisdom shall save me from reproach.

14. These manifestations are excessive and therefore suspicious ; unnatural, and therefore the fruit, not of true friendship, but of some sinister purpose.

15, 16. Flat roofs, mud-covered, thoroughly saturated in a day of great rain, leaking like a sieve, with not the cleanest of water, are the nearest like things to a quarrelsome woman—an irrepressible scold. Whoever for the honor of the house would hide her wrath, might as well hide the wind or the odors of perfumed oil which no skill can bind but which will proclaim itself. *H. C.*—A man cannot hide the wind, or clasp it in his hands. If he takes an unguent in his right hand, the odor betrays him, or it slips out. So in like manner, the

"contentious woman" is one whose faults it is impossible either to hide or check.

17. The proverb, as commonly understood, expresses the gain of mutual counsel as found in clear, well-defined thoughts. Two minds, thus acting on each other, become more acute. *E. H. P.*

The particulars in which this similitude lies seem to be the following : sameness of nature, iron with iron ; mutual action by the friction of the one piece of iron on the other piece of iron ; the result of this application of the two similar substances one to the other—the imparting of a finer polish and a sharper edge. To this is compared the effect of friendly social intercourse : " So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Iron with iron ; man with man. Iron with iron ; man—in the intercourse, the exchange, and in the mutual friction and operation of mind upon mind—with man, and the result the improvement of both. God appointed the social principle for the purpose here stated : for sharpening, not for blunting and dissipating ; for the improvement, not for the deterioration, of the mind ; for edification, not for destruction. Let us see from this the importance of well-formed friendship. He whom we admit into our friendship we admit into the formation of our character. *J. Duncan.*

Friendship is healthful and sovereign for the understanding, as it is for the affections ; for friendship maketh indeed a fair day in the affections from storms and tempests, but it maketh daylight in the understanding, out of darkness and confusion of thoughts. Whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up, in the communicating and discoursing with another ; he tosseth his thoughts more easily ; he marshalleth them more orderly ; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words ; finally, he waxeth wiser than himself ; and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. *Bacon.*

18. " Keeping the fig-tree " is not merely to own and possess, but to cultivate diligently ; to take due care of. Correspondingly, the servant who devotes himself to his duty to his master will be held in honor and rewarded. *H. C.*

19. Here the simplest and most natural meaning is also the truest. As we see our own face when we look on the mirror-like surface of the water, so in every heart of man we may see our own likeness. In spite of all diversities we come upon the common human nature in which

we all alike share. E. H. P.—In the East, the cheap and simple mirror used by the poor is the surface of water in a vessel. As the image reflected from such a surface represents the object, *e.g.*, your own face, so does your own heart represent the universal heart of man, and you may look into it to study and learn all human nature. H. C.—When the heart warms and expands toward others, going out to them with feelings of kindness and sympathy, the same emotions are elicited, quickened into life, and reflected back on ourselves. G. Coombe.

20. Sheol and death stand here for the grave personified to represent the great law of human mortality from which none are exempted. The grave is never sated—is never so full as to be satisfied without more victims. So the eyes of men never see so much that they care to see no more. H. C.—Hades, the world of the dead, and destruction (death, the destroying power, personified) have been at all times and in all countries thought of as all-devouring, insatiable (compare 30 : 16). Yet one thing, the teacher tells us, is more so, the lust of the eye, the restless craving which grows with what it feeds on (Eccl. 1 : 8). E. H. P.

21. A fining-pot will disclose the true silver, and the furnace the true gold ; and so a man's praise will disclose his true character. Praise is apt to puff up men and make them self-conceited. If it does or does not produce this effect, it will in either alternative make their true character known. "It is a fining-pot." M. S.—The choice lies between these two constructions : As the crucible tries silver, so a man should *try* the praises he gets ; or the praise he gets will *try him*. The man in either case corresponds to the crucible ; but whether considered in relation to praise as *acting* or as *acted upon* is the question. As to the facts of human nature, the former is what *ought* to be—the latter, what *is*. Neither sense is bad. H. C.

22. Another of those stringent sarcasms with which fools are assailed, in this book above all others in the Bible. Sentiment : "No chastisement, however severe, will cure a fool of his folly." Such is the obstinacy of the men who are here characterized by the appellation of *fools*. M. S.

23-27. The verses are closely connected and form one continuous counsel. Taken literally, they sing the praises of the earlier patriarchal life, with its flocks and herds, and tillage of the ground, as compared with the commerce of a later time, with money as its chief or only wealth. E. H. P.—"If you look well to your farm, it will yield whatever you may

want for food, or clothing, or even for the purchase of more land. It will, in a word, make you truly rich." M. S.

A beautiful commendation of husbandry. Give very careful attention to your flocks and herds, for wealth sought by other means is treacherous ; often transient ; even crowns are not wont to pass down in long unbroken line from generation to generation. Here is also rich beauty as well as utility. The hay is taken off ; then springs up the after-math, young, tender, and green ; the vegetable growths of the hills are gathered in for the winter. The lambs furnish wool and skins for your clothing ; goats are so profitable that you may rely on their price for the purchase of fields ; so shall your supplies of food be ample for all your household. An employment which combines such varied pleasure and beauty with so much security against failure, and such supply for man's chief wants of food and clothing, may be commended wisely. The glory of Solomon's kingdom was its agricultural wealth. H. C.

It is the beautiful characteristic of industry that, instead of taking us away from God and things eternal, it takes us directly toward Him, and puts us waiting on the seasons, the soil, the mechanical powers, which are but the faithful bosom of God Himself ; and there we hang, year by year, watching for our supplies and the nutriment that feeds our bodies. Our very industry is a kind of physical prayer, and the business itself of our busy life is to watch the gates of blessing He opens upon us. His smile feeds us, and His goodness ever before us leads us to repentance. His scheme of Providence also is adjusted so as to open windows on us continually, in this earthly house of our tabernacle, through which the building of God, not made with hands, may be the better discovered. H. B.

24. Since "riches are not forever," yea, since they must be left very soon, nor is there any certainty of keeping them any time ; that one day may consume them, one night may dispossess us of them and our life together with them, there can be no reason why we should be so solicitous about them ; no account given of our setting so high a rate upon them. For who would much regard the having custody of a rich treasure for a day or two, then to be stripped of all, and left bare ? To be to-day invested in large domains and to-morrow to be dispossessed of them ? Yet this is our case ; whatever we call ours, we are but guardians thereof for a few days. This consideration, therefore, may serve to repress or moderate in

us all covetous desires, proud conceits, vain confidences and satisfactions in respect to worldly wealth. *Barrow*.—Heaps of silver and gold may intercept the rich man's sight of

death, but they can neither intercept death's sight of the rich man, nor prevent his forcing the feeble entrenchments in which he may attempt to hide himself. *Saurin*.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

- 1 THE wicked flee when no man pursueth :
But the righteous are bold as a lion.
- 2 For the transgression of a land many are the
princes thereof :
But by men of understanding *and* knowledge
the state *thereof* shall be prolonged.
- 3 A needy man that oppresseth the poor
Is *like* a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.
- 4 They that forsake the law praise the wicked :
But such as keep the law contend with
them.
- 5 Evil men understand not judgment :
But they that seek the LORD understand all
things.
- 6 Better is the poor that walketh in his integ-
rity,
Than he that is perverse in *his* ways, though
he be rich.
- 7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son :
But he that is a companion of gluttonous
men shameth his father.
- 8 He that augmenteth his substance by usury
and increase,
Gathereth it for him that hath pity on the
poor.
- 9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing
the law,
Even his prayer is an abomination.
- 10 Whoso causeth the upright to go astray in
an evil way,
He shall fall himself into his own pit :
But the perfect shall inherit good.
- 11 The rich man is wise in his own conceit ;
But the poor that hath understanding search-
eth him out.
- 12 When the righteous triumph, there is great
glory :
But when the wicked rise, men hide them-
selves.
- 13 He that covereth his transgressions shall not
prosper :
But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them
shall obtain mercy.
- 14 Happy is the man that feareth alway :
But he that hardeneth his heart shall fall
into mischief.
- 15 As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear ;
So is a wicked ruler over a poor people.
- 16 The prince that lacketh understanding is
also a great oppressor :
But he that hateth covetousness shall pro-
long his days.
- 17 A man that is laden with the blood of any
person
Shall flee unto the pit ; let no man stay him.
- 18 Whoso walketh uprightly shall be deliv-
ered :
But he that is perverse in *his* ways shall fall
at once.
- 19 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of
bread :
But he that followeth after vain *persons*
shall have poverty enough.
- 20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings :
But he that maketh haste to be rich shall
not be unpunished.
- 21 To have respect of persons is not good :
Neither that a man should transgress for a
piece of bread.
- 22 He that hath an evil eye hasteth after riches,
And knoweth not that want shall come upon
him.
- 23 He that rebuketh a man shall afterward find
more favour
Than he that flattereth with the tongue.
- 24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and
saith, It is no transgression ;
The same is the companion of a destroyer.
- 25 He that is of a greedy spirit stirreth up
strife :
But he that putteth his trust in the LORD
shall be made fat.
- 26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool :
But whoso walketh wisely, he shall be de-
livered.
- 27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack :
But he that hideth his eyes shall have many
a curse.
- 28 When the wicked rise, men hide them-
selves :
But when they perish, the righteous in-
crease.

4. THROUGH a common sympathy the lawless praise the wicked ; but the law-abiding stir up themselves to withstand them. Since bad men will sustain each other against law and order, it behooves the good to combine their efforts on the other side. H. C.

5. Asserts the deep interdependence of morality and intellect. We lose moral discernment in proportion as we do evil. We have a right judgment in all things in proportion as our heart seeks to know God. Compare James 1 : 23, 24. E. H. P.

6. Perverse in his ways. Tried, reliable integrity is far above riches as a qualification for either a citizen or a ruler—a sentiment not inappropriate to our own country and times. Solomon says expressively, “than he who perverts his *double ways*,” using the dual number to show that his moral ways are changeable, now this, now that—guided by no moral principle.

8. See 13 : 22. The retributions of God’s providence will appear in the history of great estates. God’s infinite justice and His wise regard to human welfare forbid His awarding unmingled and abiding prosperity to men notorious for fraud and oppression. Hence wealth, amassed by usury and unrighteousness, goes into the hands of one who will use it as God designed wealth should be used—to bless the needy. Let His name be praised for this ! H. C.—The usurer preyeth upon the poor, he waxeth rich of the penury of his brother, he clotheth himself with the coat of the naked, he feedeth himself of the bread of the hungry, and devoureth his poor brother, as the great beasts do the smaller ; than which, saith Ambrose, there is no greater inhumanity and cruelty. *Rd. Turnbull.*

9. If men will not hear God’s law, He will not hear their prayer. Refusing to hear His law, they are in actual rebellion against Him. Consequently their prayer to Him is only an insult, because it is simply asking Him not to hurt, but to bless men who are actual persistent rebels against His throne. Their prayer virtually begs permission to go on to sin all they will, and to be exempted from punishment therefor. And God might as well vacate His throne as to hear such prayer propitiously ! H. C.

10. No form of evil is more hateful, no result of evil sadder, than the temptation by the wicked of those who have been righteous. Vice in such a case seems to win a twofold triumph. It gains its own ends and exults in the downfall of the good. But here also the triumph is

suicidal. In any case the tempter will suffer the punishment he deserves, and the blameless, if true to themselves, will be strengthened and ennobled by the temptation. E. H. P.

11. Solomon means to say that riches do not necessarily presuppose wisdom ; that some rich men may be sadly deficient, not only in profound knowledge, but in that fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of true wisdom ; while some poor men may be truly rich in these treasures of the mind and of the heart. H. C.

13. *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper ;* for while he covers them he cannot possibly get rid of them ; and their presence will vitiate all prosperity. Endure the shame of confessing them, that we may have the comfort of being delivered from them. *G. Bowen.*—There is the confession of sin extracted by unexpected disaster or by the foreboding of a deserved judgment ; and there is the confession of sin freely and spontaneously given. Confession is wrung from some, not by a sense of the hatefulness of sin, but from a desire of thereby obtaining security from the judgment of God. But the Christian’s confession is a very different thing : he sees and feels sin to be hateful. What pain is to the body, that is sin to his soul. He owns that he has been guilty of it ; and he pours out his confession of it freely, and fully, and explicitly before God. *Cumming.*

There is a covering of sin which proves a curse. There is a *covering* it, by not confessing it, or which is worse, by denying it—Gehazi’s covering—a covering of sin by a lie ; and there is also a covering of sin by justifying ourselves in it. I have not done this thing, or I did no evil in it. All these are evil coverings ; he that thus covereth his sin shall not prosper. But there is a *blessed* covering of sin—forgiveness of sin is the hiding it out of sight, and that’s the blessedness. *Alleine.*—Evangelical confession is the inlet to peace with God and the outlet of new obedience. *Hamilton.*

14. This fear is the wholesome fear of offending God by sin. Blessed is he who never loses this solemn fear of displeasing the great and holy God ! On the contrary, he who hardens his heart against such fear and becomes reckless as to sin and its consequences shall surely fall into ruin. H. C.—“I have known a good old man,” says Bernard, “who, when he heard of any one that had committed some notorious offence, was wont to say within himself, He fell to-day, so may I to-morrow.” Now the reason why humble souls keep up in themselves a holy fear of falling is because that is the very best way to preserve them in

their upward path. "*Happy is the man that feareth always; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.*" *T. Brooks.*

A warning finger is, as it were, lifted. Take heed against the tendencies that lie in yourself and the temptations around you. The consciousness of the possibility of the danger is half the battle. "Blessed is the man that feareth always," says the Psalm. "The confident"—by which is meant the presumptuous, and not the trustful—"goeth on and is punished." The timid—by which I mean the self-distrustful—clings to God, because he knows his danger and is safe. If we think that we are on the verge of falling we are nearer standing than we ever are besides. To lay to heart the reality, and the imminence, and the gravity of the possibility that is disclosed here is an essential part of the means for preventing its becoming a reality. There is no security for us except in the continual temper of rooted self-distrust, for there is no motive that will drive us to the continual confidence in which alone is security, but the persistent pressure of that sense that in ourselves we are nothing, and cannot but fall. The dark underside of the triumphant confidence, which on its sunny side looks up to heaven and receives its light, is self-distrust. *A. M.*

16. *Covetousness* is constituted of self-love and self-care pushed to such deep intensity and such extravagant excess, as to pay very little willing respect to any laws of God or of man which may be in its way. Its constant tendency is to grow into an absorbing, grasping, insatiable, remorseless voracity, which will seize and hoard all that suits its appetite, with scarcely an inquiry, a care, or a conscience as to how much ownership may be violated, or how many and how prized may be the interests sacrificed. A heart drunk up with such a ravenous passion, bent on the possessions of its neighbors; on cutting off their acres, occupying their buildings, opening their thrift into its own treasures; such a heart is a poor fountain of useful influence, a stinted spiritual contributor. Covetousness, in a heart intended for God's service, is a thief in the specie vault; an obstruction in the arteries from the reservoirs which refresh the population. *C. White.*

Covetousness is one of the eldest born of sin, and a prime leader in the Satanic empire of evil; no nature is too lofty, no place too sacred for its presence; being a universal passion, no enterprise is too daring for it to attempt, no sphere too extended for its range. *J. H.*—Of all vices incident to human nature, none so

powerfully and peculiarly carries the soul downward as covetousness does. It makes it all earth and dirt, burying that noble thing which can never die. So that, while the body is above ground, the soul is under it, and therefore must needs be in a state of darkness, while it converses in the regions of it. *South.*

19. "Followeth after" is more strictly *chaseth after*, runs eagerly with them. The antithesis is better preserved by following the original: The one shall have bread enough; the other poverty enough; the one, bread to satiety; the other poverty, also, to his heart's content. *H. C.*

Those that are diligent in their callings take the way to live comfortably. He that *tills his land*, and tends his shop, and minds his business, whatever it is, he *shall have plenty of bread*, of that which is necessary for himself and his family, and with which he may be charitable to the poor; he shall *eat the labor of his hands*. Those that are idle, and careless, and company keepers, though they indulge themselves in living (as they think) easily and pleasantly, they take the way to live miserably. He that has land but does not till it, neglects his business, will not take pains, but *follows after vain persons*, joins with them in their frolics and vain sports, and idles away his time with them, he shall have *poverty enough*, shall be *satiated* or *replenished* with poverty, so the word is; he takes those courses which lead so directly to it, that he seems to court it, and he shall have his fill of it. *H.*—A world bringing forth fruit spontaneously might have suited a sinless race, but it would be unsuitable for mankind as they now are. If all men had plenty without labor the world would not be fit for living in. In every country, and under every kind of government, the unemployed are the most dangerous classes. Thus the necessity of labor has become a blessing to man. *Arnot.*

The Divine blessing is visibly breathed on "painful" and honorable diligence. The strength of the mind, the purity of the soul, the due discharge of our duties in life, are all involved in and dependent upon this one primary virtue. It seems but a small matter in itself—this industrious employment of our times and faculties; and yet if rightly directed—for, of course, there may be a wasted and ill-contrived diligence—what wonders will it not accomplish! A prompt yet prudent judgment, a capacity of seeing the true proportions and nature of things, a refined and disciplined imagination, a love of truth and beauty—all these are the rewards of the diligent man, whose en-

thusiasm for honest and righteous work raises him above the follies and iniquities of the world.

W. H. D. Adams.—It is an essential condition of thrift that we should keep to legitimate occupations. There is no thrift in chance ; its central idea is order—a series of causes and effects along the line of which forethought can look and make its calculations. Speculation makes the few rich and the many poor. Thrift divides the prizes of life to those who deserve them. If great fortunes are results of speculations, the average competencies have their foundation and permanence in thrifty ways.
T. T. Munger.

20. According to the original, the “faithful man” is the man of integrity—truthful, sure. He will be great and rich in blessings. But he who makes haste to be rich is supposed to lose this integrity. Solomon does not *say* that he will miss the great blessings spoken of in the first clause, but he does more than to say it, he assumes that it cannot possibly be otherwise, and that every reader must see this. He will not be guiltless, and therefore being guilty, he will not be blessed. *H. C.*—**Maketh haste to be rich.** He that gets riches by fraud, violence, or oppression, instead of faithful and steady industry. Cupidity always tempts to fraud or oppression. *M. S.*—*Rapacity* is covetousness *grasping* ; “making haste to be rich.” This is the true “wolf in the breast,” ever feeding, and yet ever craving ; so ravenous that nothing is like it except death and the grave. It is a passion that compels every other feeling to its aid ; the day seems too short for it ; success is looked on as a reward and a spur ; failure as a punishment for some relaxation of the passion ; the wealth of others seems to reproach it ; the poverty of others to warn it. Determined to gratify itself, it overlooks the morality of the means, despises alike the tardiness of industry and the scruples of integrity, and thinks only of the readiest way to success. *J. H.*

Riches that are gotten *not* by the exercise of superior faculties, *not* by patience, energy, enterprise and industry, but by gambling, by hazardous and lucky speculation, by sudden windfalls or by hasty adventures not unmingled with fraud, are only hurtful in their effect upon the character. They tend to uproot all principle ; they throw a man afloat instead of fastening him. They upset or intoxicate the mind, not satisfy it. They kindle the passions, instead of disciplining or restraining them. *Cheever.*—The love of money can never exist alone. He who desires wealth for its own sake

will be strongly disposed to injustice. His integrity will be assailed by constant temptation and always exposed to injury. The unjust balance and the short weight will be found in the possession of a covetous man. He will be ready to take advantage of the weakness or generosity of those who surround him. These habits of trifling with integrity will invariably harden the heart. If he be possessed of power, that power will be employed for bad purposes. If he occupy a station of trust, that trust will be abused. *R. Hall.*

20. As money stands for every commodity, so covetousness steps in front of every desire, acting now as the representative of the love of pleasure, now of the necessary wants of life, and now even of real or counterfeit benevolence. The Christian, as he looks abroad over life, beholds here the cause of shipwrecks of character, of damaged fortunes, of ruined hopes. It is a fire that consumes the soul with burning cares, it magnifies the world, and absorbs all the thoughts. To no man is eternity so far off as to the covetous man. The sober Christian, then, will not aim and bend the efforts of his life to be rich. He cannot do this, for the love of riches is worldly-mindedness condensed. *T. D. W.*

21. Compare 24 : 23 and 18 : 5. It is worse than merely “not good ;” it is outrageously bad to have respect of persons, to be influenced by favoritism, to deny justice to the innocent, and to acquit the guilty. The proverb assumes that this evinces an utter want of principle. Such a man would sin for a morsel of bread, so cheap and facile a thing with him is his virtue. He would sell for less than a dish of pottage.

26. “Trusting to one’s own heart” is following its impulses, the lead of its passions, as opposed to following the wisdom of God. The first clause which, in form, only affirms such an one to be a fool, in fact assumes that this folly will ruin him ; while walking in wisdom would insure his deliverance from such ruin. *H. C.*—Unbelief men are responsible for. Unbelief is criminal because it is a moral act—an act of the whole nature. Belief or unbelief is a test of a man’s whole spiritual condition, just because it is the whole being, affections, will, conscience, and all, as well as the understanding, which are concerned in it. *A. M.*

27. What we give to the poor we deliver and intrust in His hands, out of which no force can wring it, no craft can filch it ; it is laid up in heaven, whither no thief can climb, and where no moth or rust do abide. In spite of all the

fortune, of all the might, of all the malice in the world, the liberal man will ever be rich ; for God's providence is his estate, God's wisdom and power are his defence, God's love and favor are his reward, God's Word is his assurance, who hath said that "*He which giveth to the poor shall not lack ;*" no vicissitude therefore of things can surprise Him or find Him unfurnished, no disaster can impoverish Him, no adversity can overwhelm Him ; He hath a certain reserve against all times and occasions ; He that "*deviseth liberal things, by liberal things shall He stand.*" *Barrow.*

"Hiding the eyes" here is closing one's own eyes so as not to see a suffering brother's want and shutting the sympathies of the heart against such appeals. This man shall have many a curse. The great Father commits Himself to

bless those who are with Him in loving care for the poor. (See 19 : 17 and 29 : 7.) H. C. — *He that hides his eyes*, that he may not see the miseries of the poor, nor read their petitions, lest his eye should affect his heart and extort some relief from him, he *shall have many a curse*, both from God and man. Woeful is the condition of that man who has the Word of God and the prayers of the poor against him. H.

We satisfy not our obligation to the bond and law of love by giving comfortable words. As that faith which is alone without works doth not justify us, so the pity which is alone without works doth not justify our faith. Such empty pity will go for little better than cruelty, and not to help will be interpreted oppression. *Caryl.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

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| <p>1 HE that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck
Shall suddenly be broken, and that without remedy.</p> <p>2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice :
But when a wicked man beareth rule, the people sigh.</p> <p>3 Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father :
But he that keepeth company with harlots wasteth <i>his</i> substance.</p> <p>4 The king by judgment establisheth the land :
But he that exacteth gifts overthroweth it.</p> <p>5 A man that flattereth his neighbour
Spreadeth a net for his steps.</p> <p>6 In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare :
But the righteous doth sing and rejoice.</p> <p>7 The righteous taketh knowledge of the cause of the poor :
The wicked hath not understanding to know <i>it</i>.</p> <p>8 Scornful men set a city in a flame :
But wise men turn away wrath.</p> <p>9 If a wise man hath a controversy with a foolish man,
Whether he be angry or laugh, there will be no rest.</p> <p>10 The bloodthirsty hate him that is perfect :
And as for the upright, they seek his life.</p> | <p>11 A fool uttereth all his anger :
But a wise man keepeth it back and stilleth it.</p> <p>12 If a ruler hearkeneth to falsehood,
All his servants are wicked.</p> <p>13 The poor man and the oppressor meet together :
The LORD lighteneth the eyes of them both.</p> <p>14 The king that faithfully judgeth the poor,
His throne shall be established for ever.</p> <p>15 The rod and reproof give wisdom :
But a child left to himself causeth shame to his mother.</p> <p>16 When the wicked are increased, transgression increaseth :
But the righteous shall look upon their fall.</p> <p>17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest ;
Yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.</p> <p>18 Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint :
But he that keepeth the law, happy is he.</p> <p>19 A servant will not be corrected by words :
For though he understand he will not give heed.</p> <p>20 Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words ?
There is more hope of a fool than of him.</p> <p>21 He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child
Shall have him become a son at the last.</p> <p>22 An angry man stirreth up strife,
And a wrathful man aboundeth in transgression.</p> |
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23 A man's pride shall bring him low :

But he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honour.

24 Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul :

He heareth the adjuration and uttereth nothing.

25 The fear of man bringeth a snare :

But whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

26 Many seek the ruler's favour :

But a man's judgment *cometh* from the LORD.

27 An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous :

And he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.

"THE man of reproofs" (the form of the Hebrew) is he who has been reproofed *much*, and upon whom the power of reproof has been exhausted in vain. "Hardening the neck" takes its figure from the bullock who resists the yoke and rebels against restraint—a very common figure with the Hebrews. "Destroyed" is expressed in Hebrew by a very strong verb and in its most intensive form, "*shall be utterly broken to pieces—and no healing!*" When all hope of amendment is gone, judgment without mercy must ensue, for the honor and safety of God's moral universe demand it H. C.

There is a period of sensibility, and there is also a period of its decay. There is a time during which the sensibilities of our nature are developed, becoming quicker and stronger, more delicate, refined, and perfect. But this period of tender sensibilities looks to a period of active character, for the formation of which the sensibilities are given and the requisite excitements provided for them, after which they pass from the form of mere sensibilities into habits and fixtures of feeling and of action. Every ineffectual appeal made to the sensibilities upon religious things, every appeal not followed by active effort, leaves the sensibilities in that direction less susceptible. The habit is formed of disregarding them, of disregarding the appeals made to them. This habit becomes so powerful that the difficulty is perhaps not so much to move the heart, as to break up that habit of disregarding its remonstrances or of deferring the moment of obedience to them. In truth, it makes but little difference whether the sensibilities be diminished, or the power of resistance and procrastination increased. Either way is fatal. If the sensibilities diminish, a greater power will be requisite to reach what is left ; and if the power of resistance be increased, as it certainly is by the *habit* of resistance, then a greater influence will be requisite to overcome that power. From these considerations we gather the infinite importance of the time given us for the formation of a holy character, the appropriate and critical nature of such a period, and the impossibility of exchanging it for an-

other period. It is first our seed-time, then our growing time ; the time of tenderness, of lively sensibility, of susceptibility to impressions from affecting scenes, thoughts, truths, arguments. As this period passes away the susceptibility of the soul diminishes and finally dies. *Cheever.*

The fallen man's steps have been thronged by pleading spirits. The cross of Christ has blocked his wayward course more impassably than if it had been a flaming sword. Intercessions have been made for him in heaven with hands uplifted, in which were the prints of nails. His history has been one long struggle against obstacles, with a wilful repugnance to holy restraints ; with an adroit suspense of conscience, that he might fraternize with sin, he has sought out, and discovered, and selected, and seized upon, and made sure of his own way over, and around, and through these obstacles to the world of despair. He has done it—he, and not another. A. P.

The man in the iron cage in the "Pilgrim's Progress" said : "I left off to watch and be sober ; I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts ; I sinned against the light of the Word and the goodness of God ; I have grieved the Spirit and He is gone ; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me ; I have provoked God to anger and He has left me ; I have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent." If our natural lusts are not under the restraint of a higher power ; if by that power we are not trained to watch, and check, and overpower them ; if we allow them to burst all restraint and lord it over us as they will, then will they grow into so many tyrants, who will rule us with rods of iron ; laugh at the feeble remonstrances of our conscience ; scoff at every messenger of God ; vex His Holy Spirit, and hurl us at last to everlasting woe ! W. G. B.

God's object in the self-imposed punishment of the sinner is not personal gratification or vindictiveness, but is resorted to as an extreme measure. It is a plan by which to prevent another catastrophe in His kingdom. The heart sickens at the thought of another. Loyalty throughout His vast empire, henceforth, is His grand design. The safety of an ever-progres-

sive and ever-increasing kingdom is the problem. Extreme measures which now exist, but which were not commenced before Satan fell and before sin entered the universe, can effect this. Shall God employ them, or not? They are in process of execution already; shall He arrest their normal action? Shall the event of death reverse all law and make treason glorious? Shall an impenitent Satan be reinstated in Paradise? Shall the lights of heaven be re-intrusted to his bloody and deathly hand? Universal and eternal interests hang trembling upon the answer. "Yes," and "Farewell, heaven!" must be spoken in the same breath. The future, if our conclusions be correct, lies between one hell and one heaven, or two hells and no heaven. *Townsend*.—No analogies can grapple and bring up from the depths of the darkness of the lost world any distinct probable truths. No philosophy has line and plummet long enough to sound the depths. There remains for us only the few authoritative and solemn words of God. These declare that the bliss of the righteous is everlasting; and with equal directness and simplicity they declare that the doom of the wicked is everlasting. *H. W. Beecher*.

5. The law of sincerity is as inconsistent with adulation and flattery as it is with hypocrisy. The hypocrite and flatterer belong to the same genus; one lies about himself, the other about his neighbor, but both are equally liars. There are degrees of malignity in the vice of flattery according to the motives and ends which prompt to it; but in every form it is a departure from truth, as well as a departure from that charity which meditates no wrong to another. "A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet." *J. H. T.*

7. "The righteous *knoweth*" and takes pains to know the case of the weak. The weak are not necessarily the penniless, but rather the friendless and dependent. The wicked man does not seek this knowledge; takes no pains to inform himself as to their case. *H. C.*

11. Uttereth anger . . . keepeth back and stilleth it. It is not enough to deal with the temper. We must go to the source, and change the inmost nature, and the angry humors will die away of themselves. Souls are made sweet, not by taking the acid fluids out, but by putting something in—a great love, a new spirit, the Spirit of Christ. Christ, the Spirit of Christ, interpenetrating ours, sweetens, purifies, transforms all. This only can eradicate what is wrong, work a chemical change, renovate and regenerate, and rehabili-

tate the inner man. Will-power does not change men. Time does not change men. Christ does. *H. Drummond*.

13. The poor and the oppressor. The innocent poor man and the griping oppressor meet both together; and the Lord causeth His sun to shine on them both, maintaining them both in life, doing good outwardly even to the worst-deserving. *Bishop H.*

18. The proverb is a rich testimony to the practical value of a revelation from God of man's moral duty and of the sanctions of the Divine law. *H. C.*—*Where there is no vision*, no prophet to expound the law, no priest or Levite to teach the good knowledge of the Lord, no means of grace, they are *destroyed for lack of knowledge* (Hos. 4:6). What reason we have to be thankful to God for the plenty of *open vision* which we enjoy! *H.*

23. The humble of spirit shall *take hold of* honor, shall attain it. This seems to be the sense of the Hebrew verb, and corresponds well with the first clause. Pride brings a man low in general esteem; humility raises him high. *H. C.*

Pride is cherishing an overestimate of our relative importance, involving a corresponding depreciation of others, accompanied by neglect of them or contempt for them. It is self-worship, and thus a species of idolatry. Humility, on the other hand, is a willingness to pass at our real worth, whatever that may be—a readiness to take the precise place which God has assigned to us, not envying those who seem to be in a superior position, or despising those below us, or striving to mount higher than God's providence and our own true capacity and usefulness indicate. *W. W. Patton*.—I have been more and more convinced, the more I think of it, that in general pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes. All the other passions do occasional good; but whenever pride puts in its word everything goes wrong; and what it might really be desirable to do quietly and innocently, it is mortally dangerous to do proudly. *Ruskin*.

A lowly spirit. True humility consists not so much in thinking meanly of ourselves, as in not thinking of ourselves at all. *Bowes*.—Humility is, of all graces, the chiefest when it does not know itself to be a grace at all. *Bernard*.—No humility is perfect and proportioned but that which makes us hate ourselves as corrupt, but respect ourselves as immortal, the humility that kneels in the dust but gazes on the skies. *W. A. B.*

Humility is not a lack of courage; it is not

the poverty of spirit which shrinks from encounter. It is not an abandonment of inalienable responsibilities ; to God alone we must make account for what we believe and do. Still less is it a false, artificial posture of the soul, a kind of dramatic attitude—or, as men have imagined, an ecclesiastical grimace—the putting on language, and looks, and a demeanor that might belong to something which is not really felt. Beyond everything else, humility is the victory of truth in the soul and character, which dares to recognize the insignificance and pollution of self beneath the purity and majesty of God. A humble man may well have a burning zeal for the welfare of his fellow-man, or an uncompromising hatred of moral evil, or the courage which is strong to work, to struggle, or to suffer. H. P. L.

The first test of a truly great man is his humility. All great men not only know their business, but usually know that they know it ; and are not only right in their main opinions, but usually know that they are right in them ; only they do not think much of themselves on that account. They have a curious under-sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not *in* them, but *through* them ; that they could not do or be anything else than God made them. And they see something Divine and God-made in every other man they meet, and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful. *Ruskin.*

25. The fear of what men can do unto us, with all the confusion and wretchedness in which it entangles us, is contrasted with the serene security of one, who not only “fears” the Lord, so as to avoid offending Him, but trusts in Him as his protector and guide. E. H. P.—You would get rid of that fear instantly if you realized your immortality and stood in the midst of the great world of your eternal life. What is there in scorn or criticism, that dies the day it is born, that can terrify, however it may pain, the man who is to live forever ? *P. Brooks.*

Trust in the Lord. Trust is belief of God’s promises. Those who wander about in the world, without any reliance on Divine promise, are orphans, and call for our commiseration. The believer has assurances for a great while yet to come. His filial relation to God makes him look on the future with new eyes. Whatever may befall him, one thing is certain, nothing can come but what God ordains. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” His life is insured. In proportion to his strength of trust is he raised above all

those vexatious apprehensions which men of the world experience. In his happier hours he is enabled to put in practice his Lord’s direction, and to cease taking thought for the morrow. How serene and balanced is the soul which has so fixed itself on God as to feel satisfied that all His dispensations are part of a matchless plan for its good ! J. W. A.

26. The complement of the previous verse. To trust in the favor of princes is to build upon the sands. The judgment which will set all wrong right will come, sooner or later, surely if slowly, from the Lord. E. H. P.—We may live long or briefly, prosperously or ill, conspicuous or obscure lives, but we must at last all face our final Judge. At the outset let us lay aside the common but erroneous impression that the function of judging is one which God might demit if He chose, and that in exercising it He invests Himself with the aspect of severity. Moral judgment is inseparably connected with moral character. The discrimination of the good or evil in character is not the province of one who is ignorant of moral distinctions, any more than is criticism in art the business of the blind. But just as fast and just as far as the conscience of a man becomes illuminated, intuitive, fine, commanding, just to that extent does he discriminate. He cannot help it if he would. The honest man must judge the cheat ; the sincere soul, the hypocrite ; the truthful, the liar ; and the warm, loving-hearted, the cold and calculating. Now, it is an inevitable sequence from the perfections of God that He should judge the world. He is perfect and absolute in holiness. It is not His power or wisdom and knowledge, but His immaculate purity of character that makes Him a judge. His power alone would make Him a tyrant if not controlled by moral qualities, but God’s holiness is spotless. In mediæval times men swore a royal or knightly oath by the “glory of God”—that is, His unsullied purity of being. We and all spirits are transparent and open before God. Nothing, even a diaphanous veil, separates or hides. Every scar and soilure is seen by Him. He must judge. R. S. S.

27. The just abhor the unjust because they hate and loathe wickedness. On the other hand, the wicked dislike the upright, whose very name and presence rebuke them ; whose influence annoys them and perhaps even frustrates their wicked schemes and brings them to just punishment. There never can be any common sympathy between men of morally opposite character. H. C.

CHAPTER XXX.

- 1 THE words of Agur the son of Jakeh ;
the oracle.
- The man saith unto Ithiel, unto Ithiel and Ucal :
- 2 Surely I am more brutish than any man,
And have not the understanding of a man :
- 3 And I have not learned wisdom,
Neither have I the knowledge of the Holy One.
- 4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, and descended ?
Who hath gathered the wind in his fists ?
Who hath bound the waters in his garment ?
Who hath established all the ends of the earth ?
What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou knowest ?
- 5 Every word of God is tried :
He is a shield unto them that trust in him.
- 6 Add thou not unto his words,
Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.
- 7 Two things have I asked of thee ;
Deny me *them* not before I die :
- 8 Remove far from me vanity and lies :
Give me neither poverty nor riches ;
Feed me with the food that is needful for me :
- 9 Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who is the LORD ?
Or lest I be poor, and steal,
And use profanely the name of my God.
- 10 Slander not a servant unto his master,
Lest he curse thee, and thou be held guilty.
- 11 There is a generation that curseth their father,
And doth not bless their mother.
- 12 There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes,
And *yet* are not washed from their filthiness.
- 13 There is a generation, Oh how lofty are their eyes !
And their eyelids are lifted up.
- 14 There is a generation whose teeth are *as* swords, and their jaw teeth *as* knives.
To devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.
- 15 The horseleach hath two daughters, *crying*,
Give, give.
There are three things that are never satisfied,
Yea, four that say not, Enough :
- 16 The grave ; and the barren womb ;
The earth that is not satisfied with water ;
And the fire that saith not, Enough.
- 17 The eye that mocketh at his father,
And despiseth to obey his mother,
The ravens of the valley shall pick it out,
And the young eagles shall eat it.
- 18 There be three things which are too wonderful for me,
Yea, four which I know not :
- 19 The way of an eagle in the air ;
The way of a serpent upon a rock ;
The way of a ship in the midst of the sea ;
And the way of a man with a maid.
- 20 So is the way of an adulterous woman ;
She eateth, and wipeth her mouth,
And saith, I have done no wickedness.
- 21 For three things the earth doth tremble,
And for four, *which* it cannot bear :
- 22 For a servant when he is king ;
And a fool when he is filled with meat ;
- 23 For an odious woman when she is married ;
And an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.
- 24 There be four things which are little upon the earth,
But they are exceeding wise :
- 25 The ants are a people not strong,
Yet they provide their meat in the summer ;
- 26 The conies are but a feeble folk,
Yet make they their houses in the rocks ;
- 27 The locusts have no king,
Yet go they forth all of them by bands ;
- 28 The lizard taketh hold with her hands,
Yet is she in king's palaces.
- 29 There be three things which are stately in their march,
Yea, four which are stately in going :
- 30 The lion, which is mightiest among beasts,
And turneth not away for any ;
- 31 The greyhound ; the he-goat also ;

And the king, against whom there is no rising up.

32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself,

Or if thou hast thought evil,

Lay thine hand upon thy mouth.

33 For the churning of milk bringeth forth butter,

And the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood :

So the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

THIS chapter and the next are not ascribed to Solomon ; but this to Agur and the next to Lemuel and his mother. In this chapter the style and general manner are peculiar and unique, quite unlike anything we have from the pen of Solomon. The writer brings forward his points *in groups*. Two things he prays for (vs. 7-9) ; a series of four "generations" have their very distinctive qualities (vs. 11-14) ; four things are insatiable (vs. 15, 16) ; three, yea four things are very wonderful and not easily traced out (vs. 18, 19) ; another group of three or four bring upon society intolerable disquiet (vs. 21-23) ; another group of four things are each small but very wise (vs. 24-28) ; a closing group of three or four are stately in their movements (vs. 29-31). Some proverbs disconnected and apparently independent of these groups are interspersed occasionally between them. In regard to the author of this chapter ; his time ; his country—in general, his history, nothing is certainly known. H. C.

1. Instead of the "proverbs," or simply "words of the wise," we have here and in 31 : 1 the word "oracle" or "prophecy." The Hebrew word thus rendered (*massa*) literally means "burden," and as such is used either literally of the holy things which were to be borne by the sons of Korah, or figuratively for the weight of care and responsibility. In Isaiah and Jeremiah it appears in a sense more nearly approaching to that of "prophecy," as the title of messages which the prophets were commissioned to deliver, and probably implied that the message was in the figurative sense, a "burden" which the prophet had to bear, until he had freed himself from its weight by delivering the message. E. H. P.

4. The questions contemplate God as seen in the glory and majesty of His works of creation. Most appropriately does frail, feeble man look forth upon the vastness of these works and ask, *Who* has wrought them ? *What* can I learn of His name, *i.e.*, of His nature and of the great depths of His being, His wisdom and His power ? H. C.

5, 6. Out of this consciousness of the impotence of all man's efforts after the knowledge of God rises the sense of the preciousness of every living word that God has Himself re-

vealed, whether through "the law and the prophets" or through "wise men and scribes." The preciousness of truth thus revealed, wherever it is bestowed, should restrain men from mingling with it their own imaginations and traditions. E. H. P.

If this great God, the Maker of all things, so manifestly wise and good, shall deign to speak to mortals, we may be very sure that every word He utters will be pure. See that thou add nothing to His words lest He reprove thee and convict thee of representing Him falsely. H. C. —*Every word of God* is sure, and therefore we must trust to it and venture our souls upon it. God in His Word, God in His promise, is a *shield*, a sure protection, to all them that put themselves under His protection and *put their trust in Him*. The Word of God, applied by faith, will make us easy in the midst of the greatest dangers. H.

7-9. Agur prays for two things : First, put vanity and lies far from my heart ; let my spirit never be polluted, even in the sight of God, with falsehood ; and, second, of earthly good let me have a simple competence—no more, no less. Not more, lest becoming sated and over-fed, I lose the sense of my dependence upon God, and say in guilty pride, Who is the Lord ? And what do I need from Him ? And not less, lest becoming impoverished, I should be tempted to steal, and so should dishonor the name of God ; literally, "take it up roughly," irreverently. H. C.—The wise man's prayer is not merely like that of an epicurean asking for a quiet life, between the two extremes of wealth and poverty, but first and chiefly, "truth in the inward parts," the removal of all forms of falsehood, hollowness, hypocrisy. The evil of the opposite extremes of social life is that in different ways they lead men to a false standard of duty, and so to that forgetfulness of God which passes into an absolute denial. **Food convenient for me** ; literally, "give me for food the bread of my appointed portion." The prayer of the wise man foreshadows that which we have been taught by the Divine Wisdom, and in which we pray "Give us, day by day, our daily bread." E. H. P.

8. **Remove from me vanity.** Vanity is in the mind, not in the objects of display.

The gayest dress is not a vanity, though the wearer may be full of it. The flowers are not vain, but fling their odors on the air and spread out their simple charms for admiration ; but people vain of the clothing of sheep and ornaments of birds pique each other with their silly envies and make themselves wretched over small affronts. We should pray like Agur, to have all vanities and lies put far away from us. *Bennett.*

Give me neither poverty nor riches. We must not consider Agur as praying absolutely against riches, or absolutely against poverty ; for poverty and riches are of themselves things indifferent, and the blessing of God may go with them both ; but it is a prayer of choice, or a comparative prayer, as if he had said, Give me, O God, if it be Thy will the middle between both, and feed me with food convenient for me. For though all the three conditions be so far indifferent that a man may be good, and ought to be contented or resigned in any of them ; yet if it were matter of choice, the middle is the easiest and most desirable. *Jortin.*—All things considered, he that can cut evenest between want and excess is in the safest, easiest, happiest estate—a truth which, if it were duly entertained, would quit men's hearts of a world of vexation which now they do willingly draw upon themselves ; for he that resolves to be rich and great, as he must needs fall into many snares of sin, so into manifold distractions of cares. In all experience he that sets too high a pitch to his desires lives upon the rack ; neither can be loosed till he remit of his great thoughts, and resolve to clip his wings and train and take up with the present. *Bishop II.*

There is no virtue in poverty. It is a dispensation of God's providence ; it is not a grace of God's Spirit. Viewed simply in itself, it is neither moral nor immoral. Like pain, it is just an affliction, and, like other afflictions, it depends on the use that is made of it ; it depends on the man's conduct under it whether it proves in the end a mere calamity or a blessing in disguise. Nor is it a sin to be rich. Like health and mental power, wealth is the gift of God ; and, like bodily vigor or intellectual energy, wealth may be made a great blessing. It may not only extend the sphere of the owner's enjoyment, but wisely administered it may vastly swell the sum of human happiness. One man of great substance may do more than a hundred others to encourage industry, to employ labor, to draw forth talent, to advance the arts, to alleviate misery, to extend the Gospel

—just as a man of great fortune, but great wickedness, may do more mischief than many bad men of scanty means. Viewed in itself, and supposing it to be fairly come by, wealth is neither a virtue nor a vice ; it is simply a talent, a power, a faculty—like health and genius a good gift of God, but like health and genius capable of being so perverted as to prove its owner's curse. *Hamilton.*

As there are some graces of a Christian which come not to trial till we are in want, so there are other graces which come not to trial till we have abundance. Want trieth our patience and our dependence upon God, and abundance trieth our temperance, our humility, our liberality ; yea, and our dependence upon and faith in God for the sanctifying blessing and making comfortable to us, what we have. *Caryl.*—Poverty bravely wrestled with and nobly overcome may be the very making of you. Too much money has undone many a youth ; too little has been the spur that has urged on many another to put forth all his strength, and so has developed and increased that strength. When you are getting comfortable and easy, therefore, suspect yourselves, and watch lest your activity disappear and self-sacrifice drop entirely out of your life. The mill-wheel stands still when there is too much water as well as when there is too little, and Agur's prayer is always safe. *W. M. T.*

He is rich, not that possesses much, but that covets no more ; and he is poor, not that enjoys little, but that wants too much. The contented mind wants nothing which it hath not ; the covetous mind wants not only what it hath not, but likewise what it hath. *Quarles.*

9. Use profanely the name of my God. Common swearing, if it have any meaning at all, argues in man a perpetual distrust of his own reputation, and is an acknowledgment that he thinks his bare word not to be worthy of credit. *Tillotson.*—Profanity is a vice which men have invented for themselves without prospect of pleasure or profit, and to which there is no imaginable temptation in nature. If it be an accomplishment, it is such an one as the meanest person may make himself master of ; requiring neither rank nor fortune, neither genius nor learning. *Anon.*—The basest and meanest of mankind swear with as much tact and skill as the most refined ; and he that wishes to degrade himself to the very lowest level of pollution and shame should learn to be a common swearer. Any man has talents enough to learn to curse God, and imprecate perdition on themselves and their fel-

low-men. Profane swearing never did any man any good. No man is the richer or wiser or happier for it. It helps no one's education or manners. It commends no one to any society. It is disgusting to the refined, abominable to the good, insulting to those with whom we associate, degrading to the mind, unprofitable, needless, and injurious to society; and wantonly to profane His name, to call His vengeance down, to curse Him, and to invoke His vengeance, is perhaps of all offences the most awful in the sight of God. *Lowth.*

Profane swearing is a direct insult on Almighty God, a daring affront to His supreme majesty, an insolent defiance of His justice and power, and a wanton trifling with one's own salvation. It is a complication of many sins, such as impiety to God and contempt of His authority; the abuse of speech, that distinguishing faculty of man; unbelief in heart, a disregard to if not a real disbelief of the providence, Word, and judgment of God. In perjury there is always falsehood and injustice, and often higher crimes; there may be murder. In the lower kinds of profaneness there is levity, passion, indecency, rudeness, and brutality of manners. It tends to produce still greater hardness, to extinguish all reverence for God and sacred things, and thus to introduce all other sins. The profane swearer is heaping guilt on his soul. If for every idle word which men speak they must give an account, how heavy will be the account, and how awful the punishment of that man who daily multiplies his impious and profane words! God has declared that He will not hold such persons guiltless, that He will be a swift witness against them, that He will send His curse upon them here, and execute distinguished punishment upon them hereafter. *J. Lathrop.*

11-14. Next follows a specification of *four* classes of people, each one independent of the other; and what is remarkable in the case is, that nothing is predicated of them, as to what they are to do or will do (except in one case), or even as to any retribution which awaits them. They stand in no connection with the context; and they apparently represent prevailing vices, inasmuch as whole classes are specified. It seems to be taken for granted that each of these classes will be looked upon with high disapprobation. M. S.—There are four descriptions of men worthy of our avoidance and detestation: the first is of graceless children who curse their parents; the next of hypocrites and self-pleasers; the third of proud men, who are exalted in their own opinions;

the fourth of cruel oppressors who kill and devour the poor. *Bishop H.*

12. Pure in their own eyes. In all works before grace there is no resignation of the soul to God in obedience; no self-denial of what stands in opposition to God in the heart; no clear view of the evil of sin; no sound humiliation under the corruption of nature; no inward purification of the heart, but only a diligence in an external polishing. All those acts cannot produce a habit of a different kind from them. If you could increase mere moral works to the highest pitch they are capable of, they can never make you gracious, because grace is another species, and the nature of them must be changed to make them of another kind. All the moral actions in the world will never make our hearts, of themselves, of another kind than moral. Works make not the heart good, but a good heart makes the works good. *Charnock.*

Moral virtue only restrains the outward man, it does not change the whole man. A lion in a grate is a lion still; he is restrained, but not changed, for he retains his lion-like nature still. So morality restrains many men from this and that wickedness, but it does not change and turn their hearts from wickedness. *Brooke.*—Single virtues of a man's character are of little account, so long as the very foundation of his being is corrupt. It is a small thing for a man to show that he has never committed any memorable, flagrant sins. The opposition of the heart to God is of itself a thing meriting judgment-day condemnation. Nothing more than this is required to exclude a man from the glory of the eternal heavens. *H. W. Beecher.*

The great mischief of the merely moral or conscience-system of life is that it excludes the most powerful principle of disinterested action, which is a grateful trust in a love flowing infinitely from God, through Christ and His cross. Instead of this, it takes the iron rule of law or command. Of course, on that ground its only standard and hope of acceptance or success is in the more or less merit which comes of more or less obedience to that law. But, at this point, the soul, looking at the law, is awestruck to find it a perfect law, coming from a perfect author, allowing for no sin, and nowhere offering the least encouragement to a half-obedience. At the same moment it discovers, with dismay, that, owing to inherent propensities and passions, this obedience never was nor is likely to be perfect. Where is it, then? Merit is out of the question. The utmost duty falls short, and the servant is unprofitable at best. One of two things follows: this man must either deny

to God His perfection of purity and to the law its binding authority, so as to make room for his shortcomings ; or else he must sink into utter despair because they do nothing but condemn him. This would seem to be the result of the conscience system alone, without the mediatorship and its doctrines of reconciliation in Christ. It leaves man either without reverence or without peace, or both. And it engenders a poor habit of continual self reference, self-measurement, and self-centralization, instead of taking the soul up above itself, giving it an object there to live for, in gratitude and love. F. D. H.

There are different kinds of vice, but only one kind of sin—viz., the state of being without God, or out of allegiance to God. All evil and sin are of this same negative root, the want of any holy principle ; the state set off from God, and disempowered and degraded by the separation. The respectable sin shades into the unrespectable, not as being different in kind, but only as twilight shades into the night. The evil spirit, called sin, may be trained up to politeness, and made to be genteel sin ; it may be elegant, cultivated sin ; it may be very exclusive and fashionable sin ; it may be industrious, thrifty sin ; it may be learned, scientific, eloquent, highly poetic sin ; still it is sin, and, being that, has in fact the same radical or fundamental quality that, in its ranker and less restrained conditions, produce all the most hideous and revolting crimes of the world. There is a very great difference, I admit, between a generous man and a niggard, a man who lives in thought and a man who lives in appetite, a great and wise operator in the market and a thief ; and yet, taken as apart from all accidental modifications or degrees, the sin-quality or principle is exactly the same in all. Nay, it is further true that respectable sin is more injurious, or a greater mischief, than the baser and more disgusting forms of vicious abandonment. The latter tempt no one. Contrary to this, they repel and warn away from vice every one that looks upon them. They hang out a flag of distress upon every shoal of temptation. They show us the last results of all sin, and the colors in which they exhibit sin are always disgusting, never attractive. We look down into the hell that vice opens, and with a shudder turn away ! Meantime respectable sin—how attractive, how fascinating its pleasures ! Its gay hours, its shows and equipages, its courteous society, its entertainments, its surroundings of courtly form and incident—how delicious to the inspection of fancy. Even its

excesses seem to be only a name for spirit. But there is no such thing as taking away the evil of sin by making it respectable. Make it even virtuous, as men speak, and it will only be the worse in its power, as regards the enticements it offers to evil. It will not shock any one by deeds of robbery and murder, it will not revolt any one by its disgusting spectacles of shame and misery, but how many will it encourage and shield, in just that rejection of God, which is to be their bitter fall and their eternal overthrow. H. B.

15, 16. The word rendered “horse-leech” occurs here only. Obviously he is a specimen of insatiability. Critics mostly agree that the word represents the *vampire*, a fiction of ancient mythology, supposed to frequent the desert and fasten upon its victims by night to suck their blood. Its two daughters may represent its organs for drawing blood. With this ideal conception the writer compares four other insatiable things, as in v. 16. He does not make any moral application of this group of things that are never satisfied, but seems to rest with grouping them together to illustrate each other. H. C.—We must suppose that the reader is left to apply these illustrations of an insatiable appetite to something within his own knowledge ; for example, it was easy to apply them to the miser, the glutton, the drunkard, and the debauchee ; although the writer has not himself expressly made such an application. M. S.

Nature is easily satisfied ; but when men create for themselves imaginary wants, they only provide an inexhaustible stock of solicitude and disappointment. The craving appetite will still be crying, Give, give ; and in the fulness of their sufficiency they will be in want. R. W.—Beyond a certain amount few can enjoy. Hence a moderate share, raising one above poverty, is all that wisdom will crave. But men seek wealth for its own sake, and so go through life as beasts of burden, with hardly more freedom from care than the poor laborer who earns just enough to procure him simple fare, clothing, and house rent for himself and family. Bennett.

16. The grave. Hebrew, *Sheol*. The “hell” or Hades of 27 : 20, all-consuming yet never full. The other instances explain themselves. Strangely different as they are, they have this one attribute in common. E. H. P.

17. That *eye* here represents the person who sees is plain. Yet the image of the *eye* is carried out in the closing part of the verse. This *eye*, the ravens will pick out, the young eagles will devour it—vivid images are these of severe punishment. M. S.

There is a noteworthy fidelity here to the facts of natural history. The "ravens of the valley, or brook" still haunt the ravines of the torrent-streams of Syria. Their proneness to attack the eyes of living or dead animals is a matter of notoriety. E. H. P.—It is now very well ascertained that in point of fact ravens, which feed on carrion, do commence their repast by picking out the eyes of the animal whose carcass they have discovered. It is equally true that eagles and falcons, which take living prey, do, when the game is large and powerful, aim their stroke at the eyes, which instinct teaches them to be the readiest way of disabling their victim. This is a matter of familiar knowledge in Persia, where falconry is still maintained. *Kitto*.

All God's commandments carry with them promises of rewards; and yet that which inculcates the giving of honor to one's father and mother is pre-eminently "the commandment with promise," since, in the arrangements of the Divine providence, the richest and the largest blessings most certainly attend its observance. Because true "obedience" is of the heart, and its exercise a spontaneous impulse, and is therefore not subject to merely prudential calculations, or special impulses, its action is uniform and continuous, and its results are assured. And, on the other hand, disobedience is menaced in advance with assurances of sorrows and destruction. The terrible fate denounced against the eye "that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother," is not a special and arbitrary curse, but the outcome of an ever-active principle in the Divine administration in human affairs. *Curry*.

21-23. Four it cannot bear. Here the common element is that of being intolerable, and the four examples are divided equally between the two sexes. Each has its examples of power and prosperity misused because they fall to the lot of those who have had no training for them, and are therefore in the wrong place. **23. Odious woman.** One in whom there is nothing lovable. Marriage, which to most women is the state in which they find scope for their highest qualities, blessing and being blest, becomes to her only a sphere in which to make herself and others miserable. E. H. P.

24-28. The remarkable instincts of this group of small animals constitute their special peculiarity. Each in his way seems to be "exceeding wise." In these respects they suggest what man might do if he were to give himself earnestly to the study and the practice of the

wisdom for which God has given him the capacity. H. C.

26. The shaphan (always translated by "coney") is mentioned in several other places (Lev. 11), and in the law is included among unclean animals on the ground, that although "he cheweth the cud, he divideth not the hoof." The particulars indicated in these texts agree most perfectly with an animal which has its especial home in the regions in which the Israelites abode, and which indeed derives from Syria the designation by which it is known among naturalists. This is known among the Arabs by the name of Wubar, externally something of the size, figure, and color of the rabbit. *Kitto*.—Now that the *coney* is ascertained to be the Damon or Hyrax, a shy, defenceless creature, which lurks among the cliffs of the mountains, and darts into its den at the least approach of danger, the words of Agur acquire their full significance. *Hamilton*.

27. The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands. Nothing in their habits is more striking than the pertinacity with which they all pursue the same line of march, like a disciplined army. As they have no king, they must be influenced by some common instinct. *Thomson*.

The ants know the time of their opportunity, and make the best of it. "The conies are a feeble folk." The tenant is weak; the habitation is strong. Here is a puny, a very feeble folk, going up toward the great rock house. There is something very pathetic, very beautiful in that—in weakness seeking the granite, in feebleness hiding itself in some pavilion of rock. There is a Rock provided for all weakness. "The locusts have no king, yet they come forth all of them by bands"—a very beautiful and practical republic. They have no king, but every one of them has a little bit of kingliness in himself. Here I find co-operation. That is how it must be in business, in families, in churches, in governments, in all great confederacies of life. "The spider taketh hold with her hands," etc. Does this mean skill? This skill will have its reward. Does it mean patience in working out elaborate and beautiful results? Then here is progress, getting into kings' houses, into high places, into palatial position. J. P.

32, 33. The decided self-control indicated by laying the hand upon the mouth is strongly recommended and enforced by the well-known law which is so finely put here in triple illustration: The violent agitation of milk brings butter; the wringing of the nose, blood; and

a similar rough treatment of man's sensibilities to anger fires up mad strife. This running comment assumes a logical connection between the four things noted for stately going (vs. 28-

31); the putting on of proud and haughty airs; the admonition against it appended (v. 32), and this final enforcement of the admonition in v. 33. H. C.

CHAPTER XXXI.

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| <p>1 THE words of king Lemuel; the oracle which his mother taught him.</p> <p>2 What, my son? and what, O son of my womb?
And what, O son of my vows?</p> <p>3 Give not thy strength unto women,
Nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.</p> <p>4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine;
Nor for princes <i>to say</i>, Where is strong drink?</p> <p>5 Lest they drink, and forget the law,
And pervert the judgment of any that is afflicted.</p> <p>6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,
And wine unto the bitter in soul:</p> <p>7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty,
And remember his misery no more.</p> <p>8 Open thy mouth for the dumb,
In the cause of all such as are left desolate.</p> <p>9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously,
And minister judgment to the poor and needy.</p> <p>10 A virtuous woman who can find?
For her price is far above rubies.</p> <p>11 The heart of her husband trusteth in her,
And he shall have no lack of gain.</p> <p>12 She doeth him good and not evil
All the days of her life.</p> <p>13 She seeketh wool and flax,
And worketh willingly with her hands.</p> <p>14 She is like the merchant-ships;
She bringeth her food from afar.</p> <p>15 She riseth also while it is yet night,
And giveth meat to her household,
And their task to her maidens.</p> | <p>16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it:
With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.</p> <p>17 She girdeth her loins with strength,
And maketh strong her arms.</p> <p>18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is profitable:
Her lamp goeth not out by night.</p> <p>19 She layeth her hands to the distaff,
And her hands hold the spindle.</p> <p>20 She spreadeth out her hand to the poor;
Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.</p> <p>21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household;
For all her household are clothed with scarlet.</p> <p>22 She maketh for herself carpets of tapestry;
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.</p> <p>23 Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sitteth among the elders of the land.</p> <p>24 She maketh linen garments and selleth them;
And delivereth girdles unto the merchant.</p> <p>25 Strength and dignity are her clothing;
And she laugheth at the time to come.</p> <p>26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom;
And the law of kindness is on her tongue.</p> <p>27 She looketh well to the ways of her household,
And eateth not the bread of idleness.</p> <p>28 Her children rise up, and call her blessed;
Her husband <i>also</i>, and he praiseth her, <i>saying</i>:</p> <p>29 Many daughters have done worthily,
But thou excellest them all.</p> <p>30 Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain:
<i>But</i> a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.</p> <p>31 Give her of the fruit of her hands;
And let her works praise her in the gates.</p> |
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THIS chapter, as well as the preceding, is unique and unlike the first twenty-nine of this book. It comes not from Solomon, but from a certain king Lemuel and his mother, of whom nothing further is certainly known. It is in two parts, vs. 1-9 being a wise mother's coun-

sels to her son with reference to his responsibilities and duties as king; while vs. 10-31 recite the qualities and praises of a virtuous woman. The same mother's hand may be supposed to have originated both parts of this interesting chapter. This latter portion of twenty-two

verses is an acrostic on the Hebrew alphabet, each successive verse commencing with the successive letters of this alphabet—a method due, we may suppose, jointly to the current literary taste and to its actual value as an aid to the memory. H. C.

1-9. These nine verses contain the instructions of Lemuel's mother: Caution against incontinence and drunkenness; and admonitions in respect to doing justice and vindicating the oppressed. These precepts are brief but very expressive. The cautions are directed against those vices into which kings are most apt to fall. Wine, women and oppression, in order to collect much money from the people, are things about which kings usually need very impressive instruction. The excellent mother has here given salutary advice, with great kindness and much earnestness. M. S.—How admirably does she assume that her son is raised to the throne, not to reach higher facilities for self-indulgence, but to bear worthily a higher class of responsibilities; to rule under God for the protection and vindication of human rights, especially the rights of the weak and afflicted!

2. These questions and repetitions must be understood as the natural expression of strong maternal affection. What shall I say to thee, O my beloved son? How can I express all the interest I feel in thy future course of life, in the virtue and the wisdom with which thou shalt meet the responsibilities and withstand the temptations incident to a youthful prince ascending his throne. "The son of my vows" finds a pertinent illustration in the mother of Samuel (1 Sam. 1 : 11). H. C.

4. "Not for kings, O Lemuel, not for kings, to drink wine; lest they drink and forget the law, and change the judgment of the poor." Here is certainly "total abstinence," at least for kings. The precept shows its urgency in its repetitions: "Not for kings, not for kings," not at all for them. And why? Can any one suppose that the spirit of this impassioned precept is confined to a few monarchs in Palestine and its surroundings? Is there nothing here for our Congressmen, Senators, Judges, Governors, and Presidents? The ethical meaning is plain: Not for kings, not for rulers of any kind, not for men in authority. Carry it out, and it fairly includes all men in stations, or in positions of responsibility—all whose acts and duties may be connected with the welfare of their fellow-men. *Not for such, not for such*, to drink wine. And why? Lest they forget law—forget duty. The precept must be as uni-

versal as the reason. The passage has a direct precept, and subjoined to it are incidental illustrations intended for its enforcement. Not for kings, not for rulers—no! not for them. If it must be used at all, give it to the "perishing," the "bitter in soul." The nature of the exceptions prove the totality and strength of the rule as applied to all responsible persons *in health*. Not for such, but for those in mortal anguish, the dying, the *perishing*—for persons in the extremity of pain. Give it as physicians give brandy or any other temporary stimulant, *in extremis*, to stay the dying strength till some other support can be applied; or as, before the discovery of chloroform, the surgeon might use alcohol, judiciously or injudiciously, to give a brief strength, or a short season of partial forgetfulness, or to allay in some measure the deadly fear. T. Lewis.

8, 9. In contrast with the two besetting sins of Eastern monarchs stands what was looked on as and actually was their one great duty, to give help to those who had no other helper, to redress the wrongs of those who were too crushed to complain of them, to interpose between the oppressor and his victims. E. H. P.—Let the king deem it his first glory that God has given him a mouth to plead effectually for those who are dumb as to pleading for themselves; literally [in Hebrew], *all the sons of bereavement—i.e.*, the orphans who have no father and no mother to plead in their behalf. So in the next verse, "the poor and the needy" comprise all those classes who are defenceless against oppression, and for whom therefore the great Father provides the protection of civil law and the power of righteous rulers. H. C.

10-31. This description of a true, good woman, is an alphabetical poem, consisting of twenty-two verses, each verse commencing with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and proceeding in a consecutive order throughout. The picture here presented indicates that the position of woman in the Hebrew community during the period referred to was one of special honor, trust, and efficiency. This detail of her daily life shows not only the elevating tendency of the Mosaic social system, but it is replete with interesting instruction concerning domestic customs and household economy. The family referred to here is large, wealthy, and eminent; and this wife, mother, and mistress, by her wise, energetic industry and activity, mainly ensures its prosperity and happiness. It presents a beautiful picture of the true elements of *womanly excellence*; what the true woman is in her home, to her husband, and children, and household,

and to the poor ; her high, pure aim, her industry, her helpful counsel and sympathy, her care for the outward needs and the heart training of all dependent upon her. And its inspired record, as well as its peculiar alphabetical structure, shows that it was designed for special study by all whom it concerned, from ancient to modern times. B.

An admirable portrait of a model woman. Of course the picture is laid amid the scenes of Oriental life, and adapts itself to the usages of those times. Yet everywhere we have the qualities of industry, diligence, devotion to the duties of her sphere, love and esteem for her husband, care of her family, and, to crown the whole, the spirit of kindness toward all and of true piety toward God. "Virtuous" is here in a somewhat broader sense than simply moral purity, connubial chastity. It is rather the old Roman sense of *virtus*—energy, capability—describing the woman who fills every sphere of her duty capably and nobly. H. C.—No literature of any age offers a finer ideal of the wife and mother than this Hebrew poem written not less than 2500 years ago, when the history of Greece was still the era of fable, and Rome was little more than a rude fort on the top of the Palatine Hill. For hundreds of years before Mary's day it had been on the lips of every Jewish maiden, for the words of the sacred books were familiar to the whole Jewish race, as no part of any other literature, so far as we know, has ever been to any people. The picture of loving fidelity, ceaseless industry, prudence, management, charity, thrift, wisdom, self-respect ; of noble reverence, rising from the husband on earth to God above, and of motherly virtues toward her children, must have kindled high aspirations in many a Jewish wife. *Geikie*.

10-12. *What the virtuous woman is to her husband.* To him her worth is beyond any known standard of valuable things, because his heart can perfectly trust in her truth and helpfulness ; because his interests are supreme in her thoughts and efforts. No evil or harm that she can prevent or repel will disturb his peace. He needs no spoil of warfare, because she co-operates with him in his appropriate ways of toil. B.

12. She makes it her constant business to *do him good*, and is afraid of doing anything, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice. *She does him good*, not only all the days of *his* life, but of *her own* too ; if she survive him, still she is doing him good in her care of his children, his estate, and good name, and all the concerns he left behind him. We read

of kindness showed not only *to the living*, but *to the dead* (Ruth 2 : 20). H.

13-20. *The methods and results of her willing industry.* Willingly, gladly she labors in seeking and preparing materials for the clothing of the household and the furnishing of the house. Such was the custom among all the more cultured ancient nations. Useful occupation, in administering the affairs of the home, in personal toil and supervision of the wardrobe of the family, was the fitting sphere of woman in high or lowly station.

14. Nor was her active industry limited to the supply of the household needs. The products of domestic toil were so abundant that large profits were received from their sale or exchange for other valuable commodities. Hence she is likened to the merchants' ships that bring back the products of far lands in return for home exports.

15. Early rising is referred to as one of the means by which so much is accomplished by her energetic household. Before the dawn she attends to the morning meal, and allots the toil of the day to each of her maidens.

16. Her supervision reaches also to the field and vineyard, from which, too, she derives profit, after she has purchased and planted them with the proceeds of her domestic manufacture.

17. The loose flowing garments of the East require to be gathered close about the body and fastened with the girdle before undertaking any active employment. "The use of the girdle is universal, under the impression that it greatly contributes to the strength of the loins."

18. So wisely planning and assiduously toiling within, in the house, and without, in the field, she is careful to produce that which will meet with ready sale and give satisfaction. And for protection by night, as well as for the completion of necessary tasks, the lamp burns brightly during the hours of darkness. It is added (v. 19) that she counts it no disparagement to her self-respect or her high position to *lead* her maidens in their toil.

20. Yet, with all the objects of absorbing interest, and amid all her planning, supervision, and toil, she finds time and heart to help the poor and needy on every side. These she *seeks* out and abundantly supplies.

21-24. *Her special care of her own family.* She anticipates the season of cold by providing fitting garments. For their couches and beds she weaves coverings of tapestry, and for *them* robes of silk and purple. And so, in part by his cleanly and elegant costume, the husband of such a wife is distinguished as he sits with the

leading men gathered in the gates to talk over the affairs of the day. V. 24 seems to intimate that her merchandise is, after all, a secondary matter. Only the *surplus* of products, after her family and her poor are abundantly supplied, is disposed of to the merchants.

25-27. *An admirable summary of her beautiful character.* A high, pure aim pursued with vigor and steadfastness marks her inward spirit and life. And this "strength and honor" in which her soul is clad is the ground of her tranquil content concerning the future. "If honor be your clothing," aptly says Arnot, "the suit will last a lifetime; but if clothing be your honor, it will soon be worn threadbare." From the high, pure aim, and the contented, trustful spirit naturally come words of helpful wisdom and kindness. All her discourse is characterized by prudence and patience, by excellent counsel and active sympathy. Always thoughtful, gentle, and mindful of responsibility, never censorious, harsh, or irritable, her presence and her words minister guidance and strength, comfort and peace of mind. And it is further expressly stated that she gives careful heed to the *moral training* of her household, taking care that all its members are taught the principles and led in the practices of virtue or godliness. With a profound significance it is added that she attends habitually to this moral and religious supervision of her household without intermitting her active toil in supplying their personal and family needs.

28, 29. *The just estimate of such a mother and wife by her children and husband.* Those whom she has borne, nurtured, wisely restrained, and taught in the fear and love of God acknowledge her care with loving appreciation and return while she lives, and gratefully honor and bless her memory by seeking to reproduce her beautiful character and life. And her husband, to whom she has been a light and stay by her loyal love and helpful counsel, who has been indebted to her industry and careful management in great part for his own high position in the community, expresses his estimate in the simple but comprehensive eulogy: *Many women have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.*

30, 31. *The true elements of womanly excellence, that alone are worthy of praise.* Note the contrast here. It is between personal "grace" and "beauty" on the one hand, and piety or the "fear of God" on the other. The former, loveliness of person, with all that it has of attraction, *may* cover a false heart; it *is* evanescent and unsatisfying, while true piety is an inward and higher beauty; its works are en-

during and its fruits satisfying. Therefore let her piety be extolled in its works as wrought through Divine grace, and let her rejoice in its fruits as the rewarding gifts of the same Infinite grace! B.

30. Talk as we may of beauty as a thing to be chiselled from marble or wrought out on canvas; speculate as we may upon its colors and outlines, what is it but an intellectual abstraction after all? The heart feels a beauty of another kind; looking through the outward environment, it discovers a deeper and more real loveliness. "I have seen," said Charles Lamb, "faces upon which the dove of peace sat brooding." In that simple and beautiful record of a holy life, the "Journal of John Woolman," there is a passage of which I have been more than once reminded in my intercourse with my fellow-beings: "Some glances of real beauty may be seen in their faces who dwell in true meekness. There is a Divine harmony in the sound of that voice to which Divine love gives utterance." Quite the ugliest face I ever saw was that of a woman whom the world calls beautiful. Through its "silver veil" the evil and ungentle passions looked out hideous and hateful. On the other hand, there are faces which the multitude at the first glance pronounce homely, unattractive, and such as "Nature fashions by the gross," which I always recognize with a warm heart thrill; not for the world would I have one feature changed; they please me as they are; they are hallowed by kind memories; they are beautiful through their associations. *J. G. Whittier.*—Some faces, plainest by the rules of classic symmetry, are noble with moral dignity and radiant with spiritual light. The faces we love to look at, over and over again, must be the really beautiful faces. Said Chrysostom, speaking of Bishop Flavian, "The *countenance* of holy men is full of spiritual power." This kind of beauty, the only real kind, *is* producible. The soul, such as it is, will shine through. But the completeness of that transformed expression will be seen only where the long patience of self-control, and the holiest sincerity of love, and the slow triumph of unselfish principle, have wrought their interior work, moulding the inner man into a nobleness that the outward shape may honestly image. F. D. H.

That feareth the Lord. The last lesson of the book is the same as the first. The fear of the Lord is the condition of all womanly, as well as manly excellence. E. H. P.—That which completes and crowns her character is that she *fears the Lord*, is guided and governed

by conscience and a regard to God ; this is that which is here preferred far before *beauty*, that is *vain and deceitful*. The fear of God reigning in the heart is the beauty of the soul ; it recommends those that have it to the favor of God, and is in His sight of great price ; it will last forever, and bid defiance to death itself, which consumes the beauty of the body, but consummates the beauty of the soul. H.

31. Let all her works praise her in the great assembly of the people. The moral bearing of such an example, so beautifully commended, must have been eminently wholesome in those ancient times. It is scarcely less so in our age, although the modes of domestic life and labor have so greatly changed. The same qualities of massive goodness ; the same capabilities for filling perfectly her domestic sphere ; the same words of wisdom in her mouth and the same law of kindness on her tongue are never out of order—must be in every age the cardinal elements of woman's power and of woman's worth. The verdict of the good through all ages goes unanimously to the praise of such mothers of mankind. H. C.

Woman's mission is to be the light and joy of the household, to nourish and train the immortal children within its precincts, to be the priestess in the sanctuary of home, to be the comfort and support of man in seasons of sorrow and of suffering, to move in the realm of ignorance and want, to shine, to cheer, and to bless in all the varied ministrations of sympathy and love, from the cradle to the grave. What purer, nobler, holier realm can she desire ? “The true nobility of woman is to keep her own sphere, and to adorn it.” *E. C. Wines.*

The Christian wife and mother is a Christian in the spirit by which she orders her household and nurtures her offspring. Too many mothers make their first request for their sons that of the

mother of Zebedee's children—that they may sit on thrones of wealth and power. What wonder if those sons are worldlings, are hypocrites, are criminals ? Too many train up their daughters with no loftier aim than to be beautiful brides, or to value a husband by his income, or not to be over-nice in their judgment of men because they are not expected to be virtuous, like women. Infamous effrontery toward God ! And thus are reared, generation by generation, those successive ranks of artificial and perverted things called “women of the world.” Not such is the mother that has sat, with the sisters of Bethany, at the feet of Jesus ; that has entered into devout communion with the Redeemer in His Church ; that has made her quiet dwelling fragrant with the odors of the prayers of saints. *She* stands in her household, the priestess of an immortal faith, the reconciler of human love with the Divine ; *she* moves among sons and daughters, folding the hands of infancy in prayer, joining the hands of all in fellowship, opening them in charity, and pointing with her own to heaven. Christianity exhibits no more perfect achievement than in the completed character of a spiritual womanhood ; for, passing on one stage later yet, we find the united result of a life's discipline and a heavenly faith in the Christian woman's old age. Providence has not withheld that confirmation of the power and beauty of religion from our eyes. We feel new confidence in truth, new love for goodness, new zeal for duty, new trust in God, new gratitude to Christ, when we look on her ripened holiness ; and, as her strength faints before the power of decay, behold the crown of immortality descending almost visibly upon her head ! The recollection of her former activities blends with the hallowed hope of her renewed energies in the immaterial body, with which she shall be clothed upon from heaven. And she shall rejoice, with what exceeding joy, when heart and tongue fail, at the right hand of God ! F. D. H.

ECCLESIASTES; OR, THE PREACHER.

INTRODUCTION.

No one of the canonical books of the Bible has been interpreted more variously than this. No one has seemed to tax the skill of the best critics more severely. Yet all critics agree that the book is truly a part of the Jewish sacred Scriptures, received into their canon by the same authority as other books and indorsed by Christ and His apostles with their Divine sanction. There can therefore be not the least doubt that the book, legitimately interpreted, is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3 : 16). H. C.

The Book of Ecclesiastes has, in common with the other Old Testament books, a claim to the place which it holds as one of the *inspired writings*. The author does not, indeed, assert himself to be inspired ; but neither do many other writers in the Old Testament assert this of themselves. There the book is, in the midst of the Hebrew Scriptures ; and there it has been, at least ever since the period when the Hebrew canon was closed. There at all events it was, when our Saviour and the apostles declared the Jewish Scriptures to be of *Divine origin*. Enough for us that the Jews of our Saviour's time held fast to this book, and that this usage was sanctioned by Christ and His apostles. M. S.

The Book of Ecclesiastes records the experiments, observations, and reflections of the wise king of Israel in relation to that which constitutes the true happiness and real welfare of man. Like the books of Proverbs and of Job, it deals with the questions of human life from the standpoint of "wisdom," showing that not merely as a matter of duty and obligation, but from a regard to his own highest interest, man should obey the law of God. These three books form a complete cycle in the treatment of this common theme. Proverbs exhibits the har-

mony between man's duty and his true interest, as a general fact, in the common experience of men. In brief, sententious maxims, embodying the results of observation and commanding universal assent, it sets forth the fact that right-doing has its reward and evil-doing its penalty. This is the ordinary rule in the actual working of human affairs. Like all other general rules, however, this has at least its apparent exceptions, and these are of too serious a nature, and enter too prominently into human experience, to be overlooked or to be dismissed without careful consideration. There is the case of piety without outward prosperity, and there is the case of outward prosperity without piety. The two remaining books of the series deal with these seeming exceptions, with the view of establishing the absolute universality of the rule. The Book of Job discusses the case of a man of eminent piety, who, from no fault of his own, but at the suggestion of the Evil One, was plunged into unexampled distress ; and it is shown that, notwithstanding all the darkness and mystery which clouded the dispensations, God's design in it all was a gracious one, and the final issue was the elevation of Job's piety and the increase of his prosperity. Ecclesiastes is occupied with the opposite case, of a king without equal in wisdom and prosperity, who gave himself of set purpose to extract satisfaction from purely worldly sources ; but who, after the baffling experiments of a lifetime, reached the conclusion that to fear God and keep His commandments was the whole concern of man, and the only spring of his true happiness and welfare. W. H. G.

It is that which it professes to be—the confession of a man of wide experience looking back upon his past life and looking out upon the disorders and calamities which surround him. The writer is a man who has sinned in giving

way to selfishness and sensuality, who has paid the penalty of that sin in satiety and weariness of life, but who has through all this been under the discipline of a Divine education, and has learned from it the lesson which God meant to teach him. It is tolerably clear that the recurring burden of "Vanity of vanities" and the teaching which recommends a life of calm enjoyment, mark, whenever they occur, a kind of halting-place in the succession of thoughts. The writer concludes by pointing out that the secret of a true life is that a man should consecrate the vigor of his youth to God. P. S.

There blows throughout this book a piercing chill against every earthly aim and every vain endeavor—a contempt of everything which, in the usual proceedings of men, is one-sided and perverse; an indefatigable penetration in the discovery of all human vanities and fooleries. In no earlier writing has all cause of pride and vain imagination so decidedly and comprehensively been taken from man; and no book is pervaded by such an outcry of noble indignation against all that is vain in the world. *Ewald*. —I do not know any book in the Old Testament which describes more fully, more convincingly, or more concisely the whole sum of human life, with all its changes and vanities, its occupations and plans, its speculations and pleasures, and at the same time that which alone is real, lasting, progressive, and rewarding. *Herder*.

It teaches the thinking mind how it must handle the problem of its existence. Coheleth represents the attitude of a soul pondering the emptiness of all human effort, unable to solve the perplexities of its own experience, yet gravitating with all the energy of right moral feeling toward the only solid result attainable by man. All is vanity except religion—this is the "conclusion of the whole matter." The Preacher casts penetrating glances over the phenomena of life, and gives free expression to the dark surmises which unfettered thought often suggests. But these doubts have their antidote—they are corrected; not, indeed, by direct refutation (have they ever been thus corrected?), but by holding up the great practical truth on which the soul can always rest. Like the Book of Job, Ecclesiastes exhibits the struggles of a mind perplexed by certain aspects of human life; in the story and result of these struggles lies the lesson it would teach. Travelling the pathway of speculation, the Preacher shows the doubter where lies the true goal. In a serious but sceptical generation it becomes no light thing that inspiration has respected

the profound questions of the soul, and dared to seek amid the boldest doubts a solid basis for human action. This fact of itself is a gospel to every perplexed and wavering mind. What earnest thinker, groping after the goal of faith, may not be cheered by the experience of Coheleth? *American Theological Review*, 1859.

The author was evidently a man of profound faith in God, of large and varied personal experience, of acute observation of men and things, and of deep sensibility. Probably he was first moved to write by a mind painfully full of the disappointing nature of all things viewed apart from God. Next to this we shall not err in ascribing to him a deep sympathy with fellow-men touched by the same natural feelings as himself, and suffering like him, though each in their several ways. And thirdly, there is on his part an evident desire to lead other men, and specially young men, out of the temptations which he had felt, and out of the perplexities which once entangled and staggered him. Whether his heart was chilled by old age or by the cold shadow of some former eclipse of faith can only be conjectured; but there is in Ecclesiastes an absence of that fervor of zeal for the glory of God which glows in other books, and which we are justified in regarding as a feature of Solomon's character in his early days. His immediate object would seem then to be to relieve his mind by pouring out the results of his own life, to comfort those who bore the same burden of humanity, and to lift up those who were naturally feeble or depressed by circumstances and to lead them in the way of God's commandments. W. T. B.

In respect to God there is no part of the Old Testament which inculcates more thoroughly the fear of Him, reverence for Him, His supremacy, and His sovereign right to order all things and direct all concerns. In what part of the Old Testament is there more spirituality as to worshipping him inculcated, or the fear of offending more emphatically enjoined? See 4 : 17-5 : 6, and many other passages—as 7 : 13, 14; 8 : 12, 13, 17, etc. There is, indeed, in the Psalms more of adoration and praise, and thanksgiving, and confession, and supplication; and all this for the obvious reason that the Psalms are composed for this very purpose, and of course are made up of such matter. But even in the Psalms, numerous as they are, there are not so many passages concerning future retribution as in this book; nor is the character of God set forth, and His claims vindicated with a stronger hand. M. S.

AUTHORSHIP.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is called in Hebrew "*Cohleth*," a word which signifies one who speaks in public, and which indeed is properly translated by the Greek word Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher. It is unquestionably the production of Solomon, who, for the great excellency of his instructions, is emphatically styled "the Preacher;" for the writer of it styles himself "the son of David, king of Jerusalem" (1 : 1); he describes, too, his wisdom, his riches, his writings, and his works, in a manner which is applicable only to Solomon; and by all tradition, Jewish and Christian, the book is attributed to him. *Gray*.

Although the name of Solomon is not prefixed to this book, as it is to the Proverbs and the Song of Songs, yet the description of the author (1 : 1, 12) applies so definitely to him and to no other, that it answers the same purpose as if he were named. Accordingly this book is placed, in the most ancient Jewish and Christian lists, between the other two books attributed to him, and the constant tradition of the Jewish and Christian churches has handed down Solomon without question as the author. W. T. B.

Renan declares his belief that Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs "are productions of the period of Solomon." Dean Milman writes that he is "well aware that the general voice of German criticism assigns a later date" (than that of Solomon) "to Ecclesiastes. But," he adds, "I am not convinced by any arguments from internal evidence which I have read." E. H. P.

I accept the testimony of the book as to its author, and hold that it was written by Solomon. His name is not given, but he is described so fully and precisely as to preclude all doubt. The author was a "son of David and king in Jerusalem" (v. 1); was "king over Israel in Jerusalem" (1 : 12). Solomon is the only man in whom these conditions meet. The eminent critics who deny that Solomon was the author admit that the voice of the early Jewish and Christian fathers down to the sixteenth century is unanimous for Solomon. This testimony of the Jewish writers, running back nearly or quite to the age of the compilers of the canon, should have great weight. The opening statement of the book is one of the usual forms in which the Hebrew writers introduce themselves to their readers and claim authorship. "*The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*" So we have "*The words of Jeremiah*" (Jer. 1 : 1); "*The*

words of Amos" (Amos 1 : 1). Hence there can be no doubt that the writer intended to represent himself to be Solomon. The reference to his pre-eminent wisdom and to his "setting in order many proverbs" (12 : 9) bears toward the same result. Throughout the entire range of Jewish history Solomon stands forth pre-eminent for wisdom and the only Jewish author known to the world as "setting in order many proverbs." Moreover, the account which the author gives of the salient points of his life (2 : 4-10) identifies him as really being Solomon. All these points concur to show that the writer claimed to be Solomon, and therefore prove either that he was Solomon and said these things in honest truth of himself, or was an impostor. The fact that Solomon styles himself "the Preacher" (Hebrew, "*Cohleth*") bears not at all against his being the author. The best criticism sustains this sense of the Hebrew word, given even by the translator of the Septuagint, who translates "*Ecclesiastes*"—one who addresses a public assembly—a preacher. By the use of this term he meant to indicate that in this book he appears, not in his usual and well-known character of a king on his throne; not as a monarch on the tribunal of justice, but simply a preacher of moral truth. He comes forth with a moral purpose, to exhort his fellow-men to desist from seeking their supreme good in sensual enjoyment. He comes to reason with them of "righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come." He lays off for the time his robes of royalty, and is simply a *preacher*. The term therefore is eminently appropriate for Solomon's use to designate his purpose and character in this book. H. C.

Professor M. Stuart's Arguments and Admissions.

He says that "the preterite tense in chap. 1 : 12 (I *was* king) refers, of course, to a *past* tense, and conveys the idea that when the passage was written he was no longer king." But he admits (3 : 5; 6 : 10; 7 : 10) that the same verb in the preter means "what was and *still is*." Y.—Besides, if there was some force instead of none at all in this criticism of his, what should forbid the sense—I *was* king when I made the experiments in pleasure-seeking to which I now call your attention? Just now I am rather the Preacher than the king. Again, he says, "How strange that Solomon should tell his readers that he was king in Jerusalem!" a fact that everybody would know. But this objection disappears when you admit the fact that Solomon wrote, or at least may have writ-

ten, not for his Hebrew subjects only or even chiefly, but for people in outlying countries and onward in coming ages—a fact of which the book affords very strong if not conclusive proof. When Solomon says (1 : 16), “I acquired more wisdom than all who were in Jerusalem before me,” Professor Stuart assumes that he must compare himself with kings only, of whom there was but one—David. But what forbids that he should compare himself with all *men*? And how much is the matter helped on his own hypothesis, which is that some unknown writer in the age of Ezra or Malachi put these words in the mouth of Solomon? H. C. —In chap. 5 : 1 he says there is something incongruous with the “condition and circumstances of him who had built the temple or made magnificent preparations for offerings.” But on page 18 he says, “The manner in which he (Cohelah) speaks of frequenting religious worship (referring to the same text) shows that he speaks of it in a way which would be familiar to those who frequented the temple-service.” This contradiction puts the argument at rest. Y.—To this objection it is further pertinent to reply that precisely such a development of splendor and attractiveness in the externals of the temple-worship would draw together thousands of heartless men, who would need the very caution which Solomon here gives them. H. C.

Professor Stuart further argues that there are later Hebrew words which show that the book was written after the age of Solomon. But afterward he makes the following admissions: “If one will now call to mind how often abstracts are required in a treatise of *philosophy* like the present, he will think it nothing strange, and no special proof of later Hebrew, that such nouns are frequent in Cohelah.” He then adduces eight such abstracts as the only ones that are not found elsewhere, and adds: “The easy and obvious formation of these for the writer’s purpose renders it difficult for us to establish anything from them in regard to *the age* of such forms. The use of them depended obviously and merely on the need of them; for the form is altogether *normal* and *analogous*.” Again he says: “We have, after having examined Knobel’s list of the later Hebrew words, only a few remaining. Taking the amount of what is left, we find only some ten or eleven cases which may fairly be brought within the confines of later Hebrew. And some doubt must even hang over these.” With these admissions it seems strange that his arguments should satisfy any mind that Solomon did not

compose the Book of Ecclesiastes, or that they should even raise a doubt in the mind of those who read the first verse: “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.” Y.

In regard to this question of authorship, it has seemed to me both legitimate and right that my mind should be influenced very considerably in the outset by these considerations—viz., that the book is found in the sacred canon; that it must therefore have been accepted by the original compilers of the canon as in some vital sense *inspired*; and that they must have known whether the author was in fact Solomon or some nameless writer who set up a claim to be Solomon, but who really lived in their own age and under their own eye. Now I find the utmost difficulty in bringing my mind to believe that Ezra and his associates, or, as some suppose, his successors, placed this book in the sacred Hebrew canon, knowing that it was not written by Solomon in any sense or in any part, but was really written in their own times by some man who tried to personate Solomon. Of all men, he who is inspired of God should be expected to deal honestly and to speak truthfully. It outrages our convictions of God’s eternal veracity and honesty to suppose that He directly inspired some servant of His in the age of Ezra or of Malachi to personate Solomon and claim to be, or to have been, a “son of David” and “king over Israel in Jerusalem.” Nor does it relieve the difficulty to suppose that this nameless writer himself first conceived this notion of passing himself off for Solomon and built his book upon it, and that then the Lord accepted the book as “profitable for doctrine, reproof,” etc., and consequently directed His inspired servants to give it a place in the sacred canon. H. C.—Indeed, this book transcends the power of personation and fictitious conjecture. Its whole tone harmonizes too perfectly with what must have been Solomon’s experience and reflection toward the end of his reign, to be the production of any one but himself. D. F.

The Style or Dialect of Ecclesiastes is quite peculiar. There is no extant Hebrew which very closely resembles it. The writers after the exile present more of its peculiarities than any other books extant; yet even their dialect is quite unlike this. The resemblances, such as they are, have been the staple argument with many learned critics in their attempt to prove that Solomon could not have written this book, and that some unknown author, living between Ezra and the Maccabees, *i.e.*, from fifty to three-

hundred years after the restoration from Babylon, must have produced it. I have no controversy with the critics here referred to in regard to the fact of a diversity of style between this book and the Book of Proverbs, for example, or the Psalms of David. But I account for this diversity upon an entirely different hypothesis. They say it belongs to a later age. I maintain that it belongs not to a later age, but to *another people*. The latter years of Solomon's life brought him into the closest relationship with foreigners, people of outlying lands—Tyre, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Arabia. They constituted his family, his court, and hence his most intimate associates at home; they were in closest correspondence with him abroad. Add to this his knowledge of adjacent dialects gained by foreign travel; for Solomon "*went*" to Hamath-zobah; "*went*" to Ezion-geber; and probably located and built Tadmor after personal inspection. (See 2 Chr. 8:3, 4, 17.) It follows inevitably that he would become familiar with their dialect. It does not follow that he lost his vernacular dialect, but only that he became familiar with the dialect of the "outlandish women" (Neh. 13:26), who drew him into sin, and of the outlandish princes and men of trade with whom he was in constant and somewhat intimate association. This being admitted, we may advance another step. Having become familiar with this dialect, and having occasion to write specially for this class of people, Solomon used it. No reason can be given why he should not; there is every reason why he should. But it will be asked, What is the proof that this dialect of the outlying countries in Solomon's time corresponds with that of Ecclesiastes? First, it is held by all learned critics, and is indeed undeniable, that the Hebrew, or some dialect of it, was the language of all those countries of Southwestern Asia, including the original Canaanites, Philistines, Phœnicians (*i.e.*, the people of Tyre and Sidon), Syria, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Arabia, and even Chaldea. Second, while the spoken dialect changed scarcely at all with the lapse of time among the same people, there were yet provincialisms in different localities, and some variety in the dialects spoken by different tribes and nations. Of these provincialisms we have traces in Jud. 12:5; Neh. 13:23, 24. Again, as between the "Syrian" and the common Hebrew of Palestine, a difference of dialect appears in Isa. 36:11. The language called "Syrian" was that of Assyria, yet not very widely diverse from that of the Jews. The Chaldee proper, the language of Babylon at the

time of the exile, was yet further removed from the Hebrew of Palestine, but was of the same family or group of languages. The countries lying nearer to Canaan, *e.g.*, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Syria, had dialects that were much less remote from the Hebrew of Israel than the Chaldean was. Third, fortunately we are able to adduce evidence little short of demonstration to the point now in question. It happens that some remains of the ancient Phœnician language (that of Tyre and Sidon) have come down to our times. By ancient here I mean as old as the age of Solomon. Gesenius, in a work entitled "*Monuments of the Phœnician Language*," says (as quoted by Stuart), "*The Phœnician remains are more kindred to the later than to the earlier Hebrew, e.g., the relative 'ashr' is abbreviated and only the middle consonant is fully written—an important circumstance for the history of the Hebrew language.*" This peculiar use of the relative is one of the most palpable features in the special dialect of Ecclesiastes. Yet Gesenius affirms that precisely this usage of it is universal in the dialect of Tyre in the age of Solomon. And in general the dialect of Tyre in that age is more kindred to the Hebrew of Ezra and Malachi than to the Hebrew of David. In other words, by going over the geographical boundaries of Israel in the age of Solomon, you find very nearly the same dialect which you reach by coming down five hundred years in Judah to the age of Ezra and Malachi. So that there is not the least necessity, nor even occasion to come down to the time of Malachi to find a man who could or who naturally would write in the dialect of the Book of Ecclesiastes. You have him provided in Solomon himself, made familiar with the then current dialect of Phœnicia. Again, Ecclesiastes differs yet more widely from the real Chaldean tongue. Here grammatical forms as well as new words present strong points of diversity. Hence it is worse than vain to search for an author for Ecclesiastes in some geographical location nearer to Chaldea, or in the age of greater Chaldean influence over the spoken Hebrew of Palestine. In fine, this argument might probably be made conclusive if we had before us sufficient specimens of the Hebrew dialect then in use in Tyre, Edom, Moab, and Arabia. It is very much to our purpose that all those remains which are still extant give their whole strength to sustain the theory here assumed. Yet another and distinct argument may be drawn from the choice of a Hebrew name for God. Let it be borne in mind that these names being all significant,

Elohim looks specially to the natural attributes of God; *Jehovah*, to His moral attributes. *Elohim* is God thought of as Almighty, the Lord of nature, the great God who is infinitely above all the false gods of the heathen; but *Jehovah* is the God of the promises, forever the same, forever faithful and true, forevermore the God of His covenant people. With this distinction in mind, let us consider the fact that in the Book of Proverbs the name *Elohim* occurs but five times; the name *Jehovah* about ninety times, showing that when writing for his own people, Solomon naturally used the latter name. But in the Book of Ecclesiastes, the name *Elohim* appears thirty-nine times; the name *Jehovah*, *not once*. The people of the outlying lands knew not this sacred name. To them its special significance as a God of promise—a God of covenant—was utterly unknown. Hence the fact that Solomon, writing specially for their reading, never uses this name. Yet further, the facts concerning the use of these names of God are in point to explode the favorite Neological theory of the date and author of this book—viz., that it was written after the restoration from Babylon, to comfort the Hebrew people under their national affliction. But let Ecclesiastes be compared, in respect to its use of the names of God, with the known writings of that age. In the Psalms of that period (mostly 91–150), the name *Jehovah* occurs almost exclusively. In the three prophets of the restoration, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, *Elohim* occurs in its absolute form five times; *Jehovah* no less than two hundred and fourteen times. Yet Ecclesiastes, claimed by the Neologists to bear the same date and to have the same general purpose, gives the name *Jehovah* *not even once*! H. C.

In 1838 Herzfeld, who also believed (though on different grounds) that the book is the work of a late writer, showed that most of the so-called Aramaisms are not peculiar to Ecclesiastes and later books, but exist in such books as the Pentateuch, Isaiah, and the Psalms; and he reduced the total to eight or ten Chaldee, and eleven or fifteen late Hebrew words. In 1856 Herzfeld's strictures on Knobel's list were confirmed by the independent criticism of L. Von Essen. In 1864 Dr. Pusey ("Daniel," p. 325), taking up the question where it had been left by Herzfeld, showed that many of the words regarded by him and by Knobel as distinctly Chaldee are common to other Semitic dialects, and therefore are useless as evidence of the Chaldee origin or late date of the language of Ecclesiastes; and that many of the expressions

designated as late Hebrew by Herzfeld either have earlier precedents overlooked by him, or are used to denote ideas not expressed in earlier writings. Dr. Pusey's conclusion is that not one word has been found in Ecclesiastes to characterize a later age than Solomon's. Among more recent critics Dr. Tayler Lewis and Dr. B. Schäfer conclude in favor of the authorship of Solomon. On the whole, it would appear that every word quoted from Ecclesiastes as impossible to be used before the captivity has been shown either to be used in books written, as is generally believed, before the captivity, or to be formed from words and by a grammatical process in use before the captivity, or to be represented in such books by a derivative, or to be undoubtedly common to other Semitic dialects besides Chaldee, and therefore presumably to Hebrew before the captivity, although not found in extant writings of earlier date than Ecclesiastes. And thus the allegation that the language of this book shows distinct traces of the Chaldean invasion, of the Babylonian captivity, or of any later event which affected the Hebrew tongue, appears to have been sufficiently answered. It is not to be denied that in the list of writers who maintain that the languages of Ecclesiastes could not have been used by a Jew in Solomon's age are to be found the names of some of the most eminent Hebrew grammarians to whom is mainly due the advance of Hebrew philology in the last hundred years. But when they proceed to define the time at which, according to their principles of criticism, the book must have been written, they diverge so widely from one another as to suggest a serious doubt whether such grammatical knowledge of Hebrew as is now attainable ought to be allowed all the weight that is claimed for it in deciding the date of the composition of this book. The various dates assigned to Ecclesiastes by thirty-seven modern critics reach from 699 to 8 years before Christ. W. T. B.

The number of Aramaic or Syriac words and forms in the Book of Ecclesiastes is the chief argument for its late origin and parable form. According to the view often taken, the language in which it is written could not have been in use when Solomon was king. But the antiquity of the dialect in which the author wrote is unknown. Only one thing is certain about the language. It was a cross between the Hebrew tongue and that of the Syrians on the north and east of Palestine. But wherever those who used the former came in friendly contact with those who used the latter, the dia-

lect of which we are speaking might originate. This or something similar took place in Nehemiah's time, when the children of Jews, who had married women of Ashdod, "spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language." What happened at that late period in the history may have happened five or six or seven centuries before under similar circumstances. As friendly intercourse between men who spoke Hebrew and others who spoke Syriac did not begin during the Babylonian captivity, a theory which rests on the idea that it did then begin has no foundation in fact. Their intercourse dated almost from the settlement of Israel in Palestine. The dialect which thus arose may have been spoken for ages along the borders of Ammon and Damascus. To assign the rise of the dialect used in Ecclesiastes to the Babylonian captivity is to shut one's eyes to the facts of history. To this day in Palestine "the peasant dialect proves to be much nearer to Aramaic (which Jerome says was the native language in his time) than to modern literary Arabic." History, so far as it is known, thus shows no respect to a theory which pronounces it impossible for Solomon to have written in any language but the pure Hebrew of his own age. At that very time "a memorial tablet in the language of Babylon" was set up in the Nile Valley by a king of Assyria. And in those very days "a multitude of Aramaic" (*i.e.*, Hebrew or Syriac) "words were introduced into Egypt, and it even became the fashion to give an Aramaic form to native words." Besides, the language in which the scribes of Nineveh recorded the events of history was altogether different from that spoken by the people around them. A fact so well ascertained needs no proof. Solomon, speaking pure Hebrew in his own court, and writing a dialect of it in a philosophical treatise, which was modelled on the conversation or writings of thinkers who may have used the same or a kindred form of speech, is not a singular feature in the world's history of that age. It was a common thing. And, since then, the fashion was followed for ages by the scholars of modern Europe, who preferred Latin or French to their mother tongues. Solomon may thus have adopted a custom sanctioned by ancient custom or philosophic caprice. The language of the Book of Ecclesiastes cannot, therefore, be held to disprove Solomon's authorship.

The Historical References in Ecclesiastes are also believed to prove its late origin. According to the view frequently taken, Israel was

then under foreign kings, who gave much occasion for complaint, and to whom the people paid an unwilling obedience. But all this is matter of suspicion or imagination. Not a word is said in the book itself which can fairly be held to justify these views. Kings are spoken of, and princes, and provinces, and people. But the writer is thinking of kings and people generally, as a philosopher would; and not of foreign kings ruling over his countrymen, or of Jews bowed beneath a hateful tyranny. The narrowness of vision, which sees nothing but Palestine or a part of Palestine in the book, cannot do justice to the work or its author. If Solomon wrote it, his acquaintance with the nations of the civilized world enabled him to take a breadth of view, and to support his conclusions by a range of historical examples, which are far above the narrowness of his most distinguished critics. Whoever, then, was the author of Ecclesiastes, and whatever was his object, Solomon is not excluded by any of the arguments which have been urged against his claims. *Sime.*

SUBJECTS AND AIMS OF THE BOOK.

It may be considered as a kind of inquiry into the chief good; an inquiry conducted on sound principles, and terminating in a conclusion which all, on mature reflection, will approve. One great object of Solomon appears to have been, from a comprehensive consideration of the circumstances of human life, to demonstrate the vanity of all secular pursuits. He endeavors to illustrate, by a just estimate, the insufficiency of earthly enjoyment; not with design to excite in us a disgust at life, but to influence us to prepare for that state where there is no vanity. *Gray.*

The utter vanity of all earthly things when sought as the chief good of man stands out strongly in the opening sentence as the text of this sermon; it reappears repeatedly during the discourse; it is made emphatic in the conclusion (12:8). To prove this to his readers and to impress it upon their mind and heart, he adduces his own exhaustive experience; he also draws largely from his observation of other men; he takes up in detail numerous forms of earthly good which men are wont to seek, his eye sweeping the range not of Israel alone, but of the "provinces"—those other tribes and countries with which his readers and himself were familiar—all converging to the same grand conclusion. His argumentation is not tied down to the rules of modern logic. His strain is usually discursive and not closely

consecutive, so that it is often difficult, perhaps sometimes impossible, to trace with certainty any logical connection between his successive topics. The state of the author's own mind and the views of those for whom he adapted his argument need to be known somewhat thoroughly in order to see the pertinence, beauty, and force of his book. Hence the personal history of Solomon up to the time when he wrote this book should be carefully studied in connection with the book itself as the legitimate means of obtaining the clew to his special aim and purpose in writing it. The heart of Solomon became a pleasure-loving heart; his life a pleasure-seeking life. He sought pleasure in wealth and splendor; he sought it in fame and honor; he sought it in all forms of sensual enjoyment. The immense resources at his command were lavishly expended upon this one object. Such pleasure-seeking swept him away from the fear and service of God. It was to him, we may fairly assume, "the root of all evil." It led him on to those associations which ensnared him into idolatry. A gracious providence spared Solomon to live till he became convicted, even if not radically penitent. After so much guilty wandering, he "came to himself and thought on his ways." It cannot be said on authority that he ever saw clearly the guilt of his idolatry, but it is plain that he saw the folly of his pleasure-loving life and felt the solemn obligation resting on all rational beings "to fear God and keep His commandments" as their supreme duty. Having reached these convictions, it was inevitable that he should feel the importance of undoing, so far as he might be able, the mischiefs he had done. For this purpose he became "the Preacher," and wrote this book. H. C.

Viewed from another standpoint, from the purpose of the inspiring Spirit, this sublime sermon presents the transcendent fact of a future life, as a necessary and essential complement to the present. Regarded in this higher aspect, it dwells upon the emptiness and failure of all things earthly, the inscrutable character of human events, and the impartial, irresistible onset of decay and death. These facts it presents as arguments to enforce the necessity of a future existence, where the unsatisfied cravings of man's heart may be met, where all problems of the Divine acting may have fitting solution, and where life may be forever unmarred by decay, and be unsubject to death. And it further employs the same fact to impress the reality of an ultimate judgment, of a fixed character, and a lasting destiny. So it is that this book, in its

direct and implied teachings, really contrasts the present unreal, fleeting, stationary, and unsatisfying life, with one that is real, abiding, progressive, and satisfying. And its one chief aim is earnestly to commend such a wise, right use of the life that now is, as will ensure the possession and enjoyment of that blessed life to come. B.

The doctrine of a future retribution forms the great basis and the leading truth of this book. In it the royal Preacher expatiates on the transitory condition of mankind, if considered as confined to the present state of existence; the vanity and vexation of spirit attending all present human enjoyment, which his own experience had so abundantly proved; the apparent inequality of Providence, by which there appears one event to the righteous and to the wicked. But in all the difficulties and perplexities, all that vanity and vexation of spirit, which this partial view of human nature implies, the royal Preacher brings forward the prospect of a future life and just retribution, as the solution and the remedy, the consolation and the cure. *Graves.*

After stating that he had seen the tribunals of justice filled with oppression and wickedness, the writer says (3:17) that "God will judge the righteous and the wicked," and that He has appointed a *time* in which all will come under the judicial cognizance of His tribunal. Again, there is One higher than the highest earthly ruler (5:8)—namely, One who will punish oppressors, One who will vindicate the oppressed, that have no comforter here (4:1). The young may indeed rejoice in their blessings, but they are always to keep in view the judgment to come (11:9). "God will bring to judgment every work, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (12:14). Even Knobel acknowledges that this last passage indicates, beyond all doubt, a future retribution. Thus much for passages bearing directly on the idea of a judgment to come. Intimately and necessarily connected with these are those passages which speak of a *just retribution*. God is to be *feared* (3:14). Sin makes Him *angry* (5:6). Why feared? And what will His anger do? Those that fear God shall experience deliverance (7:18). Wickedness shall not deliver those who are given to it (8:8). "It shall be well with them who fear God" (8:12). "It shall *not* be well with those who do not fear Him" (8:13). "Remember thy Creator" (12:1; with the implication of reward in case of obedience). "Fear God, and keep His commandments"

(12 : 13 ; with the same implication). Thus the doctrine of a *retribution* for good and evil, and of a *time* when every action will be scanned and judged, lies scattered through the whole Book of Coheleth. It is impossible reasonably to doubt the state of his mind in regard to these things. But in order to cast farther light on his meaning, it is necessary to take into view other things which he has said in relation to this subject. He has, in different ways, fully developed the sentiment that *retribution is not made in the present life*. All experience the same evils ; all die alike ; all are subject to the same disappointments ; the lot which the righteous deserves often falls to the wicked, and so *vice versa* ; the righteous perish not only *in* their righteousness, but *because of* it ; and so the wicked prosper *by reason of* their wickedness. Time and chance happen to all alike ; there is one event or destiny to the righteous and to the wicked, to the clean and to the unclean. We assume it as a plain doctrine in Coheleth, that (since the facts cannot be denied) *retribution, adequate and final, does not take place in the present world*. Indeed, the testimony of all ages unites in the confirmation of this position. We are, then, fully at liberty to make out the following syllogism : First, retribution, adequate and just, of good and evil, will certainly be made ; second, it is not made in the present world ; therefore, third, it must be made in a future world. If there be any way of properly shunning or avoiding this conclusion, it is unknown to me. M. S.

This belief and persuasion of the certainty of a future life arose from the common sense that men have of the difference of good and evil, and of every man's being accountable for the things done in this world, as the least degree of observation will enable men to see—they concluded, or rather they felt, from the very force of reason and conscience, that there was

an account to be given hereafter. *Such an internal argument as this, which springs up in the heart and from the heart of every man*, has a greater weight in it than all the reasonings of philosophy put together, and will tie men down, if not to hope for, yet at least to fear, a future immortality ; either of which is the silent voice of nature testifying the reality of a life to come. It is not the expectation of living that makes men infer the reasonableness or necessity of a judgment, but it is the reasonable and natural expectation of judgment which makes them infer the necessity and reality of a future life. *Bishop Sherlock.*

Keeping in view that the Book of Ecclesiastes is a treatise on the question, *What profit is there in this life if there is no other?* and that this question is preparatory to the great doctrine of *a future life and a future judgment*, which Solomon eventually declares, we find the difficulties of the book cleared up. The enigmas of the book are solved, and the treatise stands out prominently as an argument for a God, for immortality, for a future reward. *Young.*

The subject of the entire book may be expressed in a single sentence thus (compare Eccl. 1 : 2 with 12 : 13, 14) : *It is that great day when "God shall bring every work into judgment," which alone redeems "all" things—man and his affairs and the world in which he spends his brief existence—from being regarded as an inexplicable mystery, or as the greatest "vanity" imaginable.* J. M. M.—After revolving all the difficulties in his mind, the writer comes out from them with a lofty tone of morality, with an unshaken confidence in future judgment and retribution, and with high, adoring, submissive confidence in God, and in His wisdom, goodness, and power. Fear God and keep His commandments is the final, the grand result of all. M. S.

CHAPTER I.

1 THE words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
 2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher ;
 3 vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit hath man of all his labour wherein he
 4 laboureth under the sun ? One generation goeth, and another generation cometh ; and
 5 the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hast-
 6 eth to his place where he ariseth. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north ; it turneth about continually in its course, and the wind returneth again
 7 to its circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full ; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again.
 8 All things are full of weariness ; man cannot utter *it* : the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
 9 nor the ear filled with hearing. That which hath been is that which shall be ; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done : and there is no new thing under the
 10 sun. Is there a thing whereof men say, See this is new ? it hath been already, in the ages
 11 which were before us. There is no remem-

brance of the former *generations* ; neither shall there be any remembrance of the latter *generations* that are to come, among those that shall come after.

12 I the Preacher was king over Israel in
 13 Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven : it is a sore travail that God hath given to the sons of men
 14 to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun ; and, behold, all is vanity and a striving after
 15 wind. That which is crooked cannot be made straight : and that which is wanting
 16 cannot be numbered. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I have gotten me great wisdom above all that were before me in Jerusalem : yea, my heart hath had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.
 17 And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly : I perceived that this also was a striving after
 18 wind. For in much wisdom is much grief : and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

1. In this, its title, the book clearly purports to be the production of Solomon. *King* is in apposition with *Preacher*, and not with *David* ; and as Solomon was the only son of David who was king in Jerusalem, he must be meant. J. M. M.

2. God raised up Solomon. He made him healthy and handsome—wise and brilliant. He poured wealth into his lap, till it ran over ; He made him absolute monarch of the finest kingdom which the world at that time offered ; and He put into his hand a peaceful sceptre, and saved him from the hardships of the field and the perils of the fight. Thus endowed and favored, Solomon commenced the search after happiness. Everything except godly, he devoted himself to the art of enjoyment. And in carrying on his own experiment he unwittingly but effectually became God's demonstration. Into the crucible he cast rank and beauty, wealth and learning ; and, as a flux, he added youth and genius ; and then, with all the ardor of his vehement nature, he urged the furnace to its whitest glow. But when the grand projection took place, from all the costly ingredients

the entire residuum was, *Vanity of vanities !* Hamilton.

The number of things which he specifically presents to our view as *vanities* is not indeed very great. He evidently designs those which he presents to be regarded as specimens of all the rest. But the objects presented are shown in various aspects and relations. He has, indeed, repeatedly brought several topics before us ; but he places them each time in a different attitude and in new relations ; and it soon becomes evident that he has insisted on them so frequently only because of their relative importance to his main object. M. S.

3. **What profit hath a man.** The question is, as in the analogous one of Matt. 16 : 26, the most emphatic form of a negation. The word for "profit" occurs only in this book. Its strict meaning is "that which remains," the surplus, if any, of the balance-sheet of life. The question is in substance, almost in form, identical with that of our times, "Is life worth living?" E. H. P.

The question stated in this verse is substantially the same as is referred to in chaps. 2 : 3,

22 ; 3 : 9 ; 5 : 16 ; 6 : 11, etc.; *it is the great practical inquiry of the book*, and receives its final answer in chap. 12 : 13, 14. When this question was asked (Rupert of Deutz observes) the Lord had not yet said, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." **Profit.** This word occurs with remarkable frequency in Ecclesiastes, and always in the sense of *profit*, or *pre-eminence*. It is therefore opposed to *vanity*. Its derivation is from a word signifying to hang over, overflow, abound, remain over and above. W. T. B.

What profit has a man of all the pains he takes? Observe that the business of this world is described as *labor*; the word signifies both care and toil; it is work that wearies men; it is *labor under the sun*, a phrase peculiar to this book, where we meet with it twenty-eight times. There is a world above the sun, a world which needs not the sun, for the glory of God is its light, where there is work without labor and with great profit, the work of angels; but he speaks of the work *under the sun*, the pains of which are great and the gains little. H.—Solomon's inquiry then is equivalent to the question, What profit hath a man of all his labors for this life? In other words, his inquiry is, *What advantage is there in this life irrespective of another? What advantage has life without another life?* And by degrees, as will appear, he prepares the mind of his auditors for the great announcement, *there is a future reward!* Y.

4-7. Ceaseless toil, in one perpetual round with no real progress; so man lives and labors and gets no resulting good. This seems to be the central thought in these several illustrations. Human generations come and go; the earth on which they dwell abides unchanged. The sun rises and sets each day, and according to the ancient modes of expression, hastens by some unknown path from his setting place to his rising, to come forth again "like a strong man to run a race." The winds blow toward the south; then return toward the north, sweeping round their ever-varying circuits; and just so the waters are in ceaseless motion, flowing in rivers to the sea, but never filling it; for evaporation lifts those waters again into the atmosphere, where they form clouds which pour the same waters again upon the earth—filling the springs, swelling the rivers, which again run into the great deep sea. So the order of nature gives us perpetual revolution, which in one aspect of it is labor without progress. It is in this special aspect that Solomon compares these features in the course of nature with the

course of human life. It is indeed a sombre view of human life, as it is also of the course of nature; but, as to the masses of men in every age of the world yet, not more sombre than true. For what has been the product of substantial good from the toilsome lives of the myriads who have been born, have lived, and have died in the lapse of the thousands of human generations since the world began? What have they done to bless each other and to make the world better, and thereby to gain for themselves the solid pleasures of a useful life? Obviously Solomon is thinking only of the never-ceasing routine of human toil, selfishly designed and selfishly applied; and to get from nature the symbol of this he must think of the ceaseless march of human generations from the cradle to the grave with no progress in human well-being, of the naked fact of everlasting sameness in the revolutions of the sun and the winds and the waters of our globe. H. C.

4. *Generation passeth and generation cometh.* If there is no future, the coming and going of generation after generation is of little consequence. There is no result worthy of the great Author of all things. *Man* is less important than the *earth* on which he lives so short a time. *He* comes and goes, "but the earth abideth." If man's labor terminates on earthly things, and he perishes when he dies, then the true order is reversed; man is not immortal, while the earth *is* immortal. The earth is the abiding stage, while human life is a coming on and going off—a mere passing scene soon to terminate without any important result. "What profit?" Y.

There is no phenomenon of human life more solemn than its succession of generations. "One generation passeth away, another generation cometh." And, as if to put this in a light as affecting and indelible as possible, the writer immediately adds, "the earth abideth forever." A thought that gleams like a lightning flash across this panorama of life, burning it into the beholder's brain forever. Even the rude, gross, material earth, which we were created to subdue, and upon which we so proudly tread, is represented as having to the palpable sense this advantage over us. The abiding earth constitutes a little eternity, compared with the duration of its changing inhabitants. We come into it and pass over it, obliterating, perhaps, some footprints in its dust by the impress of our own, to be in their turn effaced, and then leave it with amazing rapidity, as a hireling man accomplishes his days. H. Allon.

Think sometimes when you traverse the city

how many entire generations have walked along some of those streets ; or look over it from one of the neighboring eminences, and think of the difference between the scene of all its busy crowd, and of that mightier multitude of which not one being now mingles with that crowd ! But the hill is the same, the general landscape the same—" *the earth abideth forever !*" And now we tread this same ground, or fix our eyes on the same objects ; *we*, too, shall disappear, but *they* will still be there. J. F.

6. The Bible frequently makes allusions to the laws of nature, their operations and effects. But such allusions are often so wrapped in the folds of the peculiar and graceful drapery with which its language is occasionally clothed, that the meaning, though peeping out from its thin covering all the while, yet lies in some sense concealed until the lights and revelations of science are thrown upon it ; then it bursts out and strikes us with exquisite force and beauty. *Maury*.—Maury has vividly described the currents in the atmosphere from the equator to the poles, and from the poles to the equator—the one current ranging along a lower level, the other on a higher, and both exchanging their heights at the equator and the tropics, like overlapping belts on higher and lower wheels in a factory, while at the north and south poles they move from right to left and left to right respectively, around a circular mass of air, and are steady in their course as the Gulf Stream. Unlike the trade winds, they know no rest. Their circuit is ceaseless ; and no one can examine the facts which have been ascertained and the principles which they represent, without delighting in the new meaning which lights up this Scripture sentence. *W. Fraser*.—In this single verse Solomon describes the circulation of the atmosphere as actual observation is now showing it to be. That it has its laws, and is obedient to order as the heavenly host in their movement, we infer from the fact announced in the next verse, which contains the essence of volumes by other men. *Maury*.

7. Can any history of rivers be more definite and succinct than that which is given here, when they are represented as hasting to the sea from the hills and the clouds, and as again returning to renew their course ? *W. Fraser*.—Motion is the law of the universe. Work is the law of the Christian life. God bestows His gifts not that they may be kept, but diffused. If we keep them, and are full, where is the room for more, which God is so anxious to bestow ? What would the sea gain by refusing to part with its vapors ? It could not be fuller,

and its waters would become stagnant, but now they are ever being lifted heavenward and purified, to be returned again in showers that fill the streams which pour their freshness and abundance back again into the sea. The whole universe is in motion ; nothing is made merely for rest ; everything is shining, flowing, ripening, yielding, sustaining, beautifying, cheering, comforting, or something of the kind. We fail to discern the final cause of our creation if we live unto ourselves. If grace has renewed our souls, then must grace have its fruit, or heaven's highest purpose in our salvation is defeated. We must never pause. "Work here, rest in heaven." The more we receive, the more let us do. There is no danger in receiving ever so much, in being ever so rich, ever so wise, ever so distinguished, if as we attain these we employ them for God and humanity. Only so can a life that the world calls prosperous be a life really blessed. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*.

8. It is not any quantity of knowledge, how great soever, that can make the mind of man to swell ; for nothing can fill, much less extend, the soul of man, but God and the contemplation of God ; and therefore Solomon, speaking of the two principal senses of inquisition, the eye and the ear, affirmeth that the eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing ; and if there be no fulness, then is the continent greater than the content. *Bacon*.—You may as soon fill a bag with wisdom or a chest with virtue as the heart of man with anything here below. A man may have enough of the world to sink him, but he can never have enough to satisfy him. *T. Brooks*.

9. There are no novelties, no wonders, no discoveries. This universe does not yield an eye-full, an ear-full, to its occupant. The present only repeats the past, the future will repeat them both. The inventions of to-day are the forgotten arts of yesterday, and our children will forget our wisdom only to have the pleasure of fishing up, as new prodigies, our obsolete truisms. There is no new thing under the sun, yet no repose. Perpetual functions and transient objects—permanent combinations, yet shifting atoms, sameness, yet incessant change, make up the monotonous medley. *Hamilton* —Ancient histories, and monuments older than history, disclose to us that there were, two, three, and four thousand years ago, nations scarcely less advanced in material civilization and in the arts of social life than ourselves, and who certainly possessed arts that we do not, and were able to execute works

which we cannot surpass, and some that we cannot equal, sufficient to counterbalance our possession of arts which they had not acquired, and our execution of works they had not imagined. It has been proved that many, and it may prove that more of our inventions and improvements are but revivals of old things. This was felt twenty-seven centuries ago by one who knew the primeval history as well as we do, if not better; and there is deep truth in the words of the Preacher, "The thing that hath been is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun." *Kitto*.

10. In the kingdom of Providence, though the course and method of it have not such known and certain rules as that of nature, nor does it go always in the same track, yet in the general it is still the same thing over and over again; men's hearts are still the same; their desires, pursuits, and complaints still the same; and what God does in His dealings with men is according to the Scripture, according to the manner, so that it is all repetition. What is surprising to us need not be so, for there has been the like; the like strange advancements and disappointments; the like strange revolutions and sudden turns of affairs; the miseries of human life have always been much the same, and mankind tread a perpetual round, and as the sun and wind are but where they were. *H.*

—**11.** What then comes of human toil? All human glory perishes. Life is but a treadmill process, with no resulting good that endures and pays him for his labor. This is the outcome of every pleasure-seeking life. *H. C.*

12. Hitherto we have heard Wisdom, in highly poetic language, declaring generally the vanity of all things. Now, Solomon begins in less rhythmical language to relate his personal experience, which is continued to the end of the second chapter. Beginning with the time of his accession to the throne, when the gifts of wisdom and riches were specially promised to him, he relates the anxious efforts which he made, with his unprecedented resources, to advance wisdom, pleasure, grandeur, and every personal gratification, and how the result of his experience was "no profit," and a conviction that all, even God's gifts of earthly good to good men, in this life are subject to vanity. His trial of his first gift, wisdom, is recounted in vs. 12-18

I was king. It is alleged that this expression implies that at the time when these words were written Solomon was no longer king, and that consequently the passage must have been

written by some one personating him after his death. But, whatever may be the force of the preterite in other languages, in Hebrew it is used with strict grammatical propriety in describing a past which extends into the present. Gesenius says that the Hebrew preterite is used "for our present, where this denotes a condition or attribute already long continued and still existing, or a permanent or habitual action." After giving examples, he goes on to exemplify its use *when the speaker views the action or state expressed by the verb as then first about coming to pass, in progress, or perhaps occurring at the instant.* The words in italics exactly describe the use of the preterite by Solomon in this passage. *W. T. B.*—Hengstenberg says: "The use of the preterite is no argument against Solomon's being the author of the book. The preterite is very frequently employed in descriptions of a past which stretches forward into the present, and therefore is it rendered with perfect justice in the Berleburger Bible, 'I the preacher have been king thus far, and am one still.'" Indeed, if the writer was speaking of the past only, it was perfectly natural for him to say, "I tried my experiments in the most favorable circumstances, I was king over Israel in Jerusalem." This by no means implies that he had ceased to be king. *Y.*

13. It is the vanity of human effort after such knowledge as will secure and render stable our present happiness which the writer is going to discuss. He declares at the outset that this employment is an unhappy one, although Providence has seen fit to discipline men thereby. *M. S.*

God. Thirty-nine times in this book God is named as Elohim, which was common to the true God and to false gods, and was used by believers and by idolaters; but the name Jehovah, by which He is known peculiarly to the people who are in covenant with Him, is never once used. Perhaps the chief reason for this is that the evil which is the object of inquiry in this book is not at all peculiar to the chosen people. The whole human race, all creation (Rom. 8), groans under it. Both the partial explanation given of it in this book—viz., the disharmony between God's will and man's will, and the advice founded on that explanation, were, in the time of the old dispensation, capable of being understood and practised almost equally by persons without the covenant as by Israelites. Though the Preacher's reasoning would come home with more convincing force to a believing Jew, yet it would meet

with a response from the heart of many a pious and thoughtful heathen. He does not write of or to the Hebrew race exclusively. W. T. B.

14. All is vanity and striving after wind. One of the most striking passages in the whole compass of English literature on the vanity of human glory occurs in Gibbon's "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." For once the infidel historian moralizes like a Christian preacher, or at least responds to the sentiment of the wise man, "All is vanity." After reviewing the sixty successive reigns of the Greek emperors, most of them of very brief duration, he makes these reflections: "A being of the nature of man, endowed with the same faculties, but with a longer measure of existence, would cast down a smile of pity and contempt on the crimes and follies of human ambition, so eager, in a narrow span, to grasp at a precarious and short-lived enjoyment. It is thus that the experience of history exalts and enlarges the horizon of our intellectual view. In a composition of some days—in a perusal of some hours—six hundred years have rolled away, and the duration of a life or reign is contracted to a fleeting moment; the grave is ever beside the throne; the success of a criminal is almost instantly followed by the loss of his prize; and our immortal reason survives and disdains the sixty phantoms of kings that have passed before our eyes, and faintly dwell even in our remembrance." The historian looks not beyond the horizon of time. The dates of the birth and the "downfall" of an empire bound his vision. But what would have been his reflections could he have taken his stand beyond the bounds of time, and surveyed the sweep of human ambition from the heights of eternity! *Anon.*

15. The passage (7:13) seems manifestly parallel to this, and therefore may give us a clew to the meaning here. "Consider the work of God, for who can make that straight which He hath made crooked?" In consequence of sin God has subjected the course of nature to certain physical evils, *e.g.*, destructive storms, ruinous droughts, extremes of heat and of cold, earthquakes, pestilence, disease, death. The sense of the original words is, Who can reduce to order that which God hath put in disorder? Who can change the ordinations of His providence in the rule of earthly things? H. C.—Human efforts are vain and fruitless, because they cannot change or amend the constitution and course of things. What the writer means in the present case is that there are numerous causes of human misery and suffering

which lie under no control of man. Many things are lacking which might administer to his comfort that cannot be at all supplied by any human effort.

18. The reason is here given of what is asserted at the close of the preceding verse. *Irritation* or *vexation* and sorrow result from the often-disappointed hopes and efforts to extend one's knowledge. M. S.—Is this life worth living? No, he tells us, if this world is all of life. The changes, new and wondrous to the young, soon mock us with their ever-recurring cycle, and sink to the unceasing iteration of monotone. There is no joy or good for the heart and soul in wisdom that goes no farther than "all that is done under the sun," for, while it has its great advantages, it brings along its inseparable skeleton, sorrow. Wisdom soon finds out its petty limitations, and beats in vain against the myriad knots it cannot untie. It cannot even insure a man bread, or deliver him from the accidents of life. It cannot answer the question of all questions, "What is best for a man in this life?" nor reveal a moment of the future, nor save man from death. *H. Osgood.*

Though this proposition may require to be received with some limitations, certain it is that the mere *knowledge* of things, the mere *perception* of truth, is something extremely different, something entirely separable from the *enjoyment* of things, the *possession of real happiness*. There is not between the two the slightest necessary connection; there may exist in the same character the scantiest portion of the one in union with the largest measure of the other. We by no means find that the more things we know the more we enjoy our existence; and the simple reason is that knowledge has its abode in the *understanding*, while happiness is seated, not in the understanding, but in the *heart*; so that the condition of the rudest peasant may be an object of envy to the most enlightened philosopher. In a word, happiness is a state which we are *all* equally concerned to attain; but wealth and knowledge are conditions accessible only to a *few*. Happiness has its seat in the *heart*; but wealth and knowledge are not adapted to satisfy our *affections*; therefore wealth or knowledge cannot be supposed to constitute that proper happiness of man, without which he is "made in vain." *R. Hall.*

Mere earthly knowledge is painful in its contents. For an illustration of this we may go to history. Take away our hope in God, and history becomes a sea of tumbling billows, dark and shoreless; nations rising only to fall; great souls shooting across the horizon like dying

meteors ; and all the spiritual longings of the past written down but to tell us of the vanity of our own efforts. We could bear to study history only as we forget all the higher ends it might serve as a school of training for immortal souls, and as the steps of a Divine Architect through the broken scaffolding and scattered stone-wreck upward to a finished structure. The very glimpse of this is reviving, but to give up at once Architect and end, and see human lives shattered and strewn across weary ages, and human hearts torn and bleeding, with no abiding result, this surely would fill a thoughtful mind with pain. The more of such history, the more of sorrow. *Mere earthly knowledge is hopeless in its issue.* For an illustration of this we may take the field of abstract thought. Let a man seek the origin and end of things without God, and doubt grows as search deepens, for doubt is on the face of all things if it be in the heart of the inquirer. As he enlarges the circumference of knowledge he enlarges the encircling darkness, and even the knowledge yields no ray of true satisfaction. *Ker*

There is an increase of sorrow, both because the objects of knowledge do but increase and the more he knows do multiply the more upon him, so as to beget a despair of ever knowing so much as he shall know himself to be ignorant of ; and a thousand doubts about things he hath more deeply considered which his confident (undiscovered) ignorance never dreamed of or suspected. And thence an unquietness, an irresolution of mind, which they that never drove at any such mark are (more contentedly) unacquainted with. And also, because that by how much knowledge hath refined a man's soul, so much it is more sensible and perceptive of troublesome impressions from the disorderly state of things in the world ; which they that converse only with earth and dirt have not spirits clarified and fine enough to receive. So that, except a man's knowing more than others were to be referred to another state, the labor of attaining thereto, and other accessory disadvantages, would hardly ever be compensated by the fruit or pleasure of it. *Howe.*

Mere earthly knowledge is discouraging in its personal results. Earthly science can do very much to improve man's external circumstances. It can occupy his reason, it can refine and gratify his taste ; but there are greater wants that remain. If the man seeks something to fill and warm his heart, all the wisdom of this world is only a cold phosphorescence. He must say with Goethe, "Alas that the yonder is never

here !" The tree of knowledge never becomes the tree of life. *Ker.*

The mistaking or misplacing of the farthest end of knowledge is the greatest error of all the rest ; for men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite ; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight ; sometimes for ornament and reputation ; and sometimes to enable them to obtain the victory of wit and contradiction ; and most times for lucre and profession ; but seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men. As if there were sought in knowledge a couch whereupon to rest a searching and restless spirit ; or a terrace for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect ; or a tower of state for a proud mind to raise itself upon ; or a fort or commanding ground for strife and contention ; or a shop for profit or sale—and not a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man's estate. *Bacon.*

It must be felt at once that the increase of knowledge, merely as such, does not make the soul larger or smaller ; that in the sight of God all the knowledge man can gain is as nothing ; but that the soul, for which the great scheme of redemption was laid, be it ignorant or be it wise, is all in all ; and in the activity, strength, health, and well-being of this soul lies the main difference, in His sight, between one man and another. And that which is all in all in God's estimate is also all in all in man's labor ; and to have the heart open and the eyes clear, and the emotions and thoughts warm and quick, and not the knowing of this or the other fact, is the state needed for all mighty doing in this world. Therefore let us take no pride in our knowledge. We may, in a certain sense, be proud of being immortal ; we may be proud of being God's children ; we may be proud of loving, thinking, seeing, and of all that we are by no human teaching, but not of what we have been taught by rote. . . . With respect to knowledge we are to reason and act exactly as with respect to food. We no more live to know than we live to eat. We live to contemplate, enjoy, act, adore ; and we may know all that is to be known in this world and what Satan knows in the other, without being able to do any of these. We are to ask, therefore, first, is the knowledge we would have fit food for us, good and simple, not artificial and decorated ? and, secondly, how much of it will enable us best for our work, and leave our hearts light and our eyes clear. *Ruskin.*

In the region of revealed truth, increasing knowledge will always be increasing conviction, if that knowledge be progressively reduced to practice. If knowledge be merely speculative, in extending it a man may only "increase sorrow;" for it is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness," and it is to the "doers" of his Father's will that the Saviour promises an assuring knowledge of His own "doctrine." *Hamilton.*

Unless it include the knowledge of the living God, there is sorrow in much science—that is, the more a man knows, unless he also knows the Saviour, the sadder may we expect him to become. Of this we have an instance in a late philosopher, who, like Solomon, united to ardor of physical research a thoughtful and musing spirit, and who, in his "Last Days of a Philosopher," has bequeathed to the world a manual of mournful "Consolations." It was not from any drawback in his outward lot, nor from any disappointment of his hopes, that Sir Humphry Davy took leave of life so gloomily. Of the sons of science few have been so favored. His whole career was a series of rare felicities. Nor was he the anchorite of science, a lonely and smoke-dried alchemist. He was a man of fashion, and, like Solomon, mingled "madness and folly" with graver pursuits. Yet with all his versatile powers—orator, philosopher, poet—and with all his distinctions glittering around him, his heart still felt hollow, and in his later journals the expressive entry was, "Very miserable." What was it that he wanted? He himself has told us: "I envy no quality of mind or intellect in others—not genius, power, wit, or fancy; but if I could choose what would be most delightful, and I believe most useful to me, I should prefer a firm religious belief to every other blessing; for it makes life a discipline of goodness, creates new hopes when all earthly hopes vanish, and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all lights, calling up the most delightful visions, where the sensualist and sceptic view only gloom, decay, and annihilation." *Hamilton.*

"I have ever been esteemed," Goethe wrote, "one of Fortune's chiefest favorites; nor will I complain or find fault with the course my life has taken. Yet, truly, there has been nothing but toil and care; and I may say that, in all my seventy-five years, I have never had a month of genuine comfort. It has been the perpetual rolling of a stone, which I have always had to raise anew."

It is the grandeur of the soul which God has given us which makes it insatiable in its desires—an infinite void which cannot be filled up. A soul which was made for God, how can the world fill it? God is love and goodness. Fill the soul with goodness, and fill the soul with love, *that* is the filling it with God. There is nothing else that can satisfy. So that when we hear men of this world acknowledge, as they sometimes will do, when they are wearied with this phantom chase of life, sick of gayeties and tired of toil, that it is not in their pursuits that they can drink the fount of blessedness; and when we see them, instead of turning aside either broken-hearted or else made wise, still persisting to trust to expectations—at fifty, sixty, or seventy years still feverish about some new plan of ambition—what we see is this: we see a soul formed with a capacity for high and noble things, fit for the banquet table of God Himself, trying to fill its infinite hollowness with husks. F. W. R.

Why does the human intellect crave perpetually for new fields of knowledge? It was made to apprehend an Infinite Being; it was made for God. Why does the human heart disclose, when we probe it, such inexhaustible capacities for love, and tenderness, and self-sacrifice? It was made to correspond to a love that had neither stint nor limit; it was made for God. Why does no employment, or success, or scene or field of thought, or culture of power or faculty, or friend or relative, arrest definitely and forever the onward, craving, restless impulse of our inner being? No other explanation is so simple as that we were made for the Infinite and Unchangeable God, compared with whom all else is imperfect, fragile, transient, and unsatisfying. This indeed is the true moral of this wonderful book, in which a superficial and unspiritual criticism, which indeed must move a Christian's deepest compassion, can see nothing but "the doubts and confessions of a jaded epicurean." All that is not God is vanity, in that it yields no true response to the deep and irrepressible cravings of the soul of man. H. P. L.

There must be another world, a higher life, a sublimer sphere. That alone can be the complement of this human, mortal experience. Admit that there is an unseen God, an immortal future, a perfect life beyond the grave, and what is otherwise vanity becomes filled with inspiring significance; what was otherwise vexation is compensated by boundless consolation. Augustine was right: "Thou, O God,

hast made us for Thee ; and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee." Man can only reach his wholeness in holiness ; and this world can only become bright and beautiful as it wheels into its orbit about the Sun of Righteousness. *Pier-son.*

CHAPTER II.

1 I SAID in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth ; therefore enjoy pleasure : and, behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad : and of mirth, What doeth it ? I searched in mine heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, mine heart yet guiding *me* with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

4 I made me great works ; I builded me houses ; I planted me vineyards ; I made me gardens and parks, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit : I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the forest where trees were reared : I bought menservants and maidens, and had servants born in my house ; also I had great possessions of herds and flocks, above all that were before me in Jerusalem : I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces : I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, concubines very many. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem : also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them : I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced because of all my labour ; and this was my portion from all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do : and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness and folly : for what *can* the man *do* that cometh after the king ? *even* that which hath been already done. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness : and yet I perceived that one event

15 happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me ; and why was I then more wise ? Then I said in my heart, that this also was vanity. For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no remembrance for ever ; seeing that in the days to come all will have been already forgotten. And how doth the wise man die even as the fool !

17 So I hated life ; because the work that is wrought under the sun was grievous unto me : for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

18 And I hated all my labour wherein I laboured under the sun : seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool ? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. Therefore I turned about to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labour wherein I had laboured under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skilfulness ; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what hath a man of all his labour, and of the striving of his heart, wherein he laboreth under the sun ?

23 For all his days are *but* sorrows, and his travail is grief ; yea, even in the night his heart taketh no rest. This also is vanity.

24 There is nothing better for a man *than* that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I ? For to the man that pleaseth him *God* giveth wisdom, and knowledge, and joy : but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that pleaseth God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

1, 2. SOLOMON had tried learning and discovered that he could not find solid and lasting happiness in its pursuit and acquisition ; he next makes trial of pleasure. He bids his soul

enjoy the gratification of appetite, of refined tastes, and of earthly grandeur. But this attempt proved more vain than the former one. J. M. M.

Innocent mirth, seasonably and moderately used, is a good thing, fits for business and helps to soften the toils and chagrins of human life; but when it is excessive and immoderate, it is foolish and fruitless. H.—Leaving out the people of God, could we analyze these two things—the world's mirth and the world's morality—we should make an ominous discovery. Amid all the abounding laughter and hilarity we should find no happiness truly Divine. We should find no gladness which the thought of God had kindled; we should find very little but what the thought of God would quench and extinguish it. And amid all the decorum and good conduct prevailing in many places, we should find no morality truly devout. We should find virtuous conduct prompted by the love of kindred, the love of reputation, the love of a quiet conscience, but very little prompted by the love of God. We should find the happiness all hollow and the goodness all counterfeit. Assuming godliness as the standard of genuineness, we should find the morality was not gold, but gilding, and that the mirth was not the wine of paradise, but earth's cold water colored purple. *Hamilton.*

3. From chap. 1 : 13 to the end of this chapter he is relating his attempt to find something which should answer the question (1 : 3), something exempt from vanity and really “good for the sons of men.” Here (2 : 3) he says that in the course of this attempt, while his heart was directing him (as a charioteer directs his horses or a shepherd his sheep) with wisdom, and while he was following that guidance, he determined to draw on with him his flesh by wine, thus making his flesh, which he speaks of as distinct from himself, a confederate and subsidiary in his attempt. So, in Rom. 7 : 25 the apostle speaks of the mind, the flesh and himself, as if they were *three distinct personalities*. W. T. B.—His studies and his feasts were foils to each other, and he tried whether both mixed together would give him that satisfaction which he could not find in either separately. This Solomon proposed to himself, but he found it *vanity*. H.

4-8. This is a chapter of Solomon's personal history. The reader will find much of it in its historic form in 1 Kings 9 and 10. He built a magnificent house (temple) for the Lord his God; one for himself; one for his Egyptian wife; another for a royal arsenal, “the house of the forest of Lebanon.” The last clause of

v. 8, it is now generally conceded by the best critics, must have the sense—*a wife and wives*. The original words seem to have no reference whatever to musical instruments. “The delights of the sons of men” are amorous pleasures. The prominence of these pleasures in the actual life of Solomon forbids their omission in this list. Indeed their very prominent place in his life corresponds to their place in the climax here. It also appears in the history that he had one wife “par excellence”—viz., the daughter of Pharaoh; and besides her, many subordinate wives. H. C.

5, 6. “The Pools of Solomon” lie south of Bethlehem, upon the usual route from Hebron to Jerusalem, and about six miles from the Holy City. They lie at the south end of a small valley, and below them is another valley, narrow and rocky, about two miles in length, terminating in a close ravine, and shut in by high hills which rise as straight as palisades. *Kitto.*—Here are the remains of a very remarkable aqueduct which carried the water from the sealed fountain at Solomon's Pools across the valley by means of a stone siphon, and afterward delivered it at Jerusalem at a level high enough to supply Herod's palace and the whole city with water. The stone tubing is finished in the most beautiful manner, and the several portions are joined together by a very hard, fine cement. The so-called Pools of Solomon lie in a valley to the southwest of Bethlehem, and consist of three large tanks, so arranged that as much water as possible may be collected and stored for the use of the city. The lower pool is the largest, being 582 feet long, about 180 feet broad, and 50 feet deep, and it presents some peculiar features in its construction; round the sides are rows of seats with steps leading from one to the other, and there are several other arrangements that would lead us to believe that it was at one time used as a naval amphitheatre for nautical displays. One of the chief sources of water-supply is a subterranean fountain close to the upper pool. The distance given by Josephus, 400 stadia (six miles), agrees very fairly with the length of the aqueduct from the source to Jerusalem. Of the date of the pools themselves we can form no certain opinion, but there is nothing to preclude the idea that some of them at least were made by Solomon. *Wilson.*

7. *Above all that were in Jerusalem before me.* This expression (compare also v. 9 and 1 : 16) has given occasion to cavil, inasmuch as David was the only king of Israel who had preceded Solomon in Jerusalem. It is not necessary to explain this by referring to the fact that there

had been a long line of kings in Jerusalem from the time of Melchizedek, and we do not know how long before. No mention is made in this verse of kings prior to Solomon, but only of inhabitants of Jerusalem generally; and it is no unheard-of thing for private citizens to be possessed of princely fortunes, and to rival kings in the magnificence of their style of living. W. H. G.

9. In v. 3 he tells us that he indulged in wine under the guidance of *wisdom* or *discretion*. Here he tells us that his *discretion* was ever retained, in the midst of all his various indulgences. In other words, he never gave himself up to immoderate and excessive indulgences, but acted as a sober man, earnestly making experiments in order to learn what the true good is. Tempered by this same discretion were his indulgences at large, which he next describes. M. S.

10. He did not restrict himself in anything that he desired, or that could afford him gratification. And he had a real inward pleasure in all that he was doing, in the success of his schemes and enterprises, in the beauty, the magnificence, and refinement with which he had surrounded himself. *This was my portion from all my labor.* He was not a person of a morose and discontented humor, whom nothing could please. He was capable of enjoying these various sources of pleasure, and he did enjoy them. W. H. G.—The pleasure which Solomon found in the act of working, here and in chap. 3 : 22 and chap. 9 : 9, described as a portion, and also perhaps the pleasure felt in the process of acquiring wisdom (1 : 13 ; 2 : 13, 14), is admitted to be good, if received from God (2 : 26 ; v. 18. Compare 1 Tim. 4 : 4). But such pleasure being transitory is subject to vanity, and therefore does not afford a sufficient answer to the repeated question, “What profit hath a man?” (1 : 3.) W. T. B.

11. *Then I looked on* (or, turned to) *all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored* (or, toil that I had toiled) *to do.* Now comes the time of serious reflection. He ponders all this, and undertakes to estimate it at its real value. It had, indeed, afforded him a passing enjoyment. But was this, after all, man’s best and highest occupation? The gratification was certainly short-lived. All this wealth and splendor could not arrest the stroke of death; and then what would become of all these things in which he had taken so much pride? (See vs. 18–21.) As the result of these reflections he came to the conclusion *all was vanity*, empty, fleeting, unsubstantial. W. H. G.

He thus concludes his account of this costly and grand experiment, by including in the inventory all that could please his eyes or give the least joy to his heart. Not one of these things were beyond his reach. He had as much delight from them as mortal could derive. If any other man had experienced any worldly pleasure of which he could boast, Solomon more. But this fleeting enjoyment was all the portion or reward which he received from his labor in providing all these vast and expensive means of pleasure. There was no lasting happiness to be had as the reward or portion for all this outlay and toil. J. M. M.—The curse of unsatiableness lies upon the creature. Honors cannot satisfy the ambitious man, nor riches the covetous man, nor pleasures the voluptuous man. Man cannot take off the weariness of one pleasure by another, for after a few evaporated minutes are spent in pleasure, the body presently fails the mind, and the mind the desire, and the desire the satisfaction, and all the man. T. Brooks.

I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which in truth is very low; whereas those who have not experienced always overrate them. When I reflect on what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I cannot persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry of bustle and pleasure of the world had any reality; but I look on all that is past as one of those dreams which opium commonly occasions, and I do by no means wish to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that resignation that most men boast? No, I really cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but killing time the best way I can, now that time is become my enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of the journey. *Chesterfield*.—When a Christian minister speaks slightly of the world he is supposed to do it in the way of his profession, and to decry, through envy, the pleasures he is forbidden to taste. But here, I think, you have the testimony of a witness every way competent. No one ever knew the world better or enjoyed more of its favors than this nobleman. Yet you see in how poor, abject and wretched a condition, at the time when he most wanted help and comfort, the world left him and he left the world. The sentences above cited from him compose, in my humble opinion, the most striking and affecting sermon on the sub-

ject ever yet preached to mankind. *Bishop Horne.*

12-16. The writer has now come to the end of his experiences in regard to the means of happiness. Neither efforts to acquire wisdom nor folly in indulgence will secure this, nor even these combined (vs. 1-11). He comes then deliberately to inquire whether *wisdom* in itself has any pre-eminence over folly. In some respects, he says, it has; but still these are not sufficient to exempt it from the imputation of being *vanity*; for, first, it dies with every man who acquires it, and passes not on by heritage to another. Every one must acquire it for himself. Next, it does not exempt the wise man from the same common lot with the fool. All are the sport of accident alike, and all die at last alike and are equally forgotten. Thirdly, a repulsive aspect is given to life by the fact that all which one has laboriously and skilfully toiled to acquire passes, at his death, to others of whom he cannot know whether they will be wise or foolish. What good, then, can come to him which will compensate for all the toil and suffering and wakeful nights which he has endured in order to obtain substance? Who can look on all this but with feelings of despair? The conclusion then to which he comes is, that the only real good to be derived from all is that which we enjoy from day to day in the gratification of hunger and thirst and other appetites which are the sources of present pleasure. This is our own, and we may regard it as a kind of good. But even this, to whatever it may amount, comes all from the hand of God. Such as are *good in His sight*—*i.e.*, the objects of His favor, may sometimes be permitted to enjoy what the sinner, His enemy, has labored to provide. But, after all, even this will not exempt the whole from the category of *vanity and empty pursuit*. Such pleasures are too low and fleeting to confer substantial good on rational beings. M. S.

12. The text admits of this explanation: "What is any man that in this study of wisdom and folly shall come after me, who, from my position, have had such peculiar advantages (see 1:16, and compare 2:25) for carrying it on? That which man did of old he can but do again; he is not likely to add to the result of my researches, nor even to equal them." W. T. B.

13. From the view thus taken of *sagacity* or *wisdom*, considered in respect to its power of conferring solid and lasting happiness, the writer turns, for a moment, to the consideration of the natural and essential difference between wisdom and folly in themselves considered or viewed merely in respect to their proper nature. In this

view of the matter he felt himself compelled to yield to the superior claims of wisdom. It gives insight into things, and explains many of them which must remain dark to folly. The pre-eminence asserted is illustrated and confirmed by the next verse.

14. To say that *one's eyes are in his head* means that he has eyes, and that they are in their proper place and will be appropriately employed—*i.e.*, that the man who has them will employ them to see. But the fool, who has no mental eye, must of course walk in darkness. Yet the latter part of the verse dashes down, in the main, the hopes which any one might be inclined to cherish from the circumstance of the essential difference between the two. *One destiny awaits all*—*i.e.*, they have after all a common lot; all are subject to toil and suffering and death, to loss of property, loss of friends, and loss of hopes. M. S.

15-17. "Saying in the heart" is thoughtful reflection, talking to one's self, and turning the matter over and over in one's mind. As it happeneth to the fool, so it will happen to me, even to *me* (wise though I am); why, then, have I been so very wise? That is, what comes of it? Of what use does it prove to be to me, since in the end I must succumb to the common destiny of all mortal men, whether wise or foolish. Common to both is this inevitable oblivion that sweeps over the deeds and the life of all mankind. They will none of them be long remembered. "That which is now, in the days to come will have been long ago forgotten," and therefore be quite lost from the thought of all the living. The last clause of v. 16 is better read as an exclamation of sadness: "And how dieth the wise man like the fool!" Alas! to think that the wise no less than the fool must die; that both are doomed to the same inevitable destiny of death! Taking this view of the subjection of all human life to this revolting necessity of passing away from earth and being forevermore forgotten, I hated life, for all the work done under the sun appeared odious to me. My heart sickened at the thought of such death and oblivion—the unavoidable conditions of all human existence. H. C.

15. If death is the end of man, what sufficient motive have we for cultivating our minds and extending our knowledge? Why should we enter upon a course of intellectual cultivation; why store our minds with knowledge, if, in the midst of this glorious pursuit, with new fields opening before us rich in mines of wealth and the thirst of acquisition ungratified, we are to be struck down and the intellectual light for-

ever quenched within us? And who would not dread to be endowed with powers capable of such vast compass—with an imagination that takes a universe for its field, or can find a world in an atom—at home both in the past and in the future, and making both equally subservient to its purposes—if in their full and vigorous exercise they are to be brought to a sudden and everlasting close? If the only end to be reached by study is the grief of having the objects of knowledge multiply around us, and the despair of ever knowing as much as we are ignorant of, the savage or the idiot may well be congratulated on their happiness. J. M. M.

16. Of the wise man no remembrance.

If there be no eternal remembrance of the world's wise men any more than of its fools, it is otherwise with the wise ones of the heavenly kingdom. God has so arranged it that "the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance." The only posthumous fame that is truly permanent is the memory of God, and the only deathless names are theirs for whose living persons He has found a place in His own love, and in the love of holy beings like-minded with Himself. *Hamilton.*

17. I hated life. This expression, extorted from Solomon by the perception of the vanity of his wisdom and greatness, may be compared with Paul's emphatic words (Rom. 8 : 22, 23) in view of the subjection of creation to vanity. The words of Moses (Num. 11 : 15) and of Job (3 : 21 ; 6 : 9) are scarcely less forcible. W. T. B.

18. He must *leave them*. He could not at death take them away with him, nor any share of them, nor should he return any more to them, nor would the remembrance of them do him any good.

19. He knows not whom he must leave it to (for God makes heirs), or what *he* will prove to whom he leaves it, whether *a wise man or a fool*, a wise man that will make it more, or a fool that will bring it to nothing ; *yet he shall have rule over all my labor*, and foolishly undo that which his father wisely did. H.

20. He speaks just as every man who gives himself to serious, calm reflection, however successful he may have been in his enterprises, must speak. If death is to end all ; if he has no treasures laid up in heaven ; if there be no heaven in which to lay up treasures, well may he give up his heart to despair in respect to the work to which his strength and life have been devoted. J. M. M.

22, 23. These verses look simply at the case of the man who is toiling to amass wealth.

How hard he works ! How diligently he plans ! How intense are his anxieties ! Sleep will not come at his bidding. Hengstenberg well translates, "For all his days are sorrow, and discontent is his plague." Truly such a life is a vanity. H. C.

24. The best use, therefore, to be made of the wealth of this world is to use it cheerfully, to take the comfort of it and do good with it. We must not over-toil ourselves so as, in pursuit of more, to rob ourselves of the comfort of what we have. We must not over-hoard for hereafter, nor lose our own enjoyment of what we have to lay it up for those that shall come after us, but serve ourselves out of it first. But observe, He would not have us to give up business and take our ease that we may *eat and drink* ; no, we must *enjoy good in our labor* ; we must use these things not to excuse us from, but to make us diligent and cheerful in our worldly business. H.

Solomon meant to say that the surest and the best of all the good that is properly of this world consists in the moderate enjoyment of our daily bread, and in our labor to supply these natural wants of those who are dependent upon us. So much God gives us to enjoy, and it should be accepted as His gift. These moderate enjoyments are here put in contrast with the corroding anxieties, the ever-grasping spirit and never-ceasing labors of the man who is bent on hoarding immense treasures and building up a vast estate. Solomon would say, Take the moderate enjoyment of what suffices to meet your wants, and desist from those infinite toils for what you can never enjoy. H. C.—This sentiment recurs repeatedly as the result of the author's meditations upon life. (See 3 : 12, 13, 22 ; 5 : 18–20 ; 7 : 14 ; 8 : 15 ; 9 : 7–10 ; 11 : 9.) From a comparison of these passages together with chap. 5 : 1–7 and the whole of chap. 12, it is manifest that it is not sensual indulgence which the author commends as the best thing a man can attain in a world of vanity, but only such a cheerful, joyful participation of present blessings as is consistent with the thought of God and retribution, or with obedience to the commands of the Creator. *Noyes.*

It is from the hand of God. The *good things* themselves that we enjoy are not only the products of His creating power, but the gifts of His providential bounty to us. And *then* they are truly pleasant to us when we take them from the hand of God as a Father, when we eye His wisdom giving us that which is fittest for us and acquiesce in it, and taste His love and goodness, relish them and are thankful for them.

A heart to enjoy them, too, is the gift of God's grace. Unless He gives us wisdom to make a right use of what He has in His providence bestowed upon us, and withal peace of conscience that we may discern God's favor in the world's smiles, we cannot make our souls enjoy any good in them. H.

25. Here, as in v. 12, Solomon appeals to his own experience as conclusive by reason of his superior advantages. This verse may be read as a parenthesis.

26. Even the best gifts of God, so far as they are given in this life "beneath the sun," are not permanent, and are not always efficacious for the purpose for which they appear to us to be given. Compare Augustine—"Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it repose in Thee." W. T. B.—There is as much disguise thrown round the expressions of the displeasure as of the love of God. To the worldly man prosperity is as often a cloaked enemy as to the Christian adversity is a cloaked friend. And of the two the disguise is far easier to penetrate when a spiritual benefit comes in the form of earthly trial, than when a spiritual calamity comes in the form of earthly indulgence and success. Yet the one is as often,

at least, the minister of the Lord's anger as the other is of His love. W. Hanna.

Thus we are brought, step by step, after passing prominent particulars in review, to the general conclusion that no possessions or pursuits of men secure the good which they need and seek for, and that the most we can make out of all these is the enjoyment which we experience from the actual satisfying of the wants and cravings of our physical nature. Even this is not the result of our own efforts merely, but is bestowed upon us by the special favor of God. M. S.

The self-centred life is a weary round and round; it comes home to lodge every night. It is the fountain of the *ennuie* and dissatisfaction of the world. It groans for a change, but takes none. It seeks life in an eternally recurring self. Man has not begun to live till he has carried the centre of life away from self into the heavens. All that is good and lovely, all that is sweet and peaceful, all that is heroic and wise, all that is truest in life, is born of this self-distanced theory of life; for it is the measure to which the morning stars first set the song of life. G. S. Eldridge.

CHAPTER III.

1 To every thing there is a season, and a
time to every purpose under the heaven:
2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time
to plant, and a time to pluck up that which
3 is planted; a time to kill, and a time to
heal; a time to break down, and a time to
4 build up; a time to weep, and a time to
laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to
5 dance; a time to cast away stones, and a
time to gather stones together; a time to embrace,
and a time to refrain from embracing;
6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a
7 time to keep, and a time to cast away; a
time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to
8 keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to
love, and a time to hate; a time for war,
9 and a time for peace. What profit hath he
that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?
10 I have seen the travail which God hath
given to the sons of men to be exercised
11 therewith. He hath made every thing beautiful
in its time: also he hath set the world
[or, *eternity*] in their heart, yet so that man

cannot find out the work that God hath done
12 from the beginning even to the end. I know
that there is nothing better for them, than
to rejoice, and to do good so long as they
13 live. And also that every man should eat
and drink, and enjoy good in all his labour,
14 is the gift of God. I know that, whatsoever
God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing
can be put to it, nor any thing taken
from it: and God hath done it, that men
15 should fear before him. That which is hath
been already; and that which is to be hath
already been: and God seeketh again that
which is passed away [or, *requireth that
which is past*].
16 And moreover I saw under the sun, in
the place of judgment, that wickedness was
there; and in the place of righteousness,
17 that wickedness was there. I said in mine
heart, God shall judge the righteous and the
wicked: for there is a time there for every
18 purpose and for every work. I said in mine
heart, *It is because of the sons of men, that*

God may prove them, and that they may see that they themselves are *but as* beasts.
 19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts ; even one thing befalleth them : as the one dieth, so dieth the other ; yea, they have all one breath ; and man hath no pre-eminence above the beasts : for all is
 20 vanity. All go unto one place ; all are of

21 the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast whether
 22 it goeth downward to the earth ? Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works ; for that is his portion : for who shall bring him
back to see what shall be after him ?

1-15. THERE is in this chapter a transition from Solomon's personal experience of life to that of mankind generally ; but it is closely connected with the preceding chapter. There (v. 26) he contemplated the different conditions of two men each leading an active life. The works of the first, through God's ordinance, bring him a portion of happiness ; but the works of the second are not beneficial to the doer. It follows that the works of men are subject in their results to another will besides that of the doer, or are under the control of God. Here we have in fact the germ of the great question of later times—how to reconcile man's free will with God's decrees. Solomon's way of stating it is that to every separate work which goes to make up the great aggregate of human activity (*i.e.*, the "travail," 1 : 13 ; 3 : 10), there is a season, an appropriate time which God appoints for its being done (3 : 1-8). To the question (v. 9), What profit has man the worker therein ? he answers that the works of men, if done according to God's appointment, are a part of the work that God maketh (v. 11), that beautifully arranged scheme of Divine Providence which, as a whole, is, by reason of its extent and duration, incomprehensible to us, notwithstanding our far-reaching aspirations, and the power of looking before and after which God gives us (v. 11). Man's good is to rejoice and do good in his lifetime, which he can do only as God appoints (vs. 12, 13). God's work, of which this would be a part, is forever and is perfect (and so not subject to vanity), and calculated to teach men to fear Him (v. 14). His work, which was begun long ago, is now going on to completion ; His work hereafter will be a complement of something which was done previously ; and He recalls the past in order to add to it what shall make it complete and perfect (v. 15). The principle of Divine government—that every work in order to be permanent and successful must be God's work as well as man's work—is declared in Psalm 127 : 1, 2 (attributed to Solomon) quite as plainly as in this chapter. W. T. B.

That which he insists on is the thought that the circumstances and events of life form part

of a Divine Order, are not things that come at random, and that wisdom and, therefore, such a measure of happiness as is attainable, lies in adapting ourselves to the order and accepting the guidance of events in great things and small, while shame and confusion come from resisting it. E. H. P.

1-8. The sense of the special clauses in this passage is for the most part clear. Every earthly life has its beginning and its close, both determined in the plan of God's providential rule of human affairs. Planting and plucking up are to vegetables what birth and death are to men. So killing and healing relate to man ; breaking down and building up to cities and the great works of human art and labor. Weeping and mourning come of calamity ; but laughing and dancing express good fortune and joy. "Casting forth stones" (v. 5) was practised by an enemy to injure arable lands for cultivation. Thus Israel treated the best lands of Moab (2 Kings 3 : 19). I understand him to say simply that this world is so governed providentially under God's hand that these unlike events are in fact constantly occurring, and have their place in the completed history of human affairs. They actually occur in the routine of human life, yet are thought of here rather in their relation to the agency and purpose of God in them than as related to the moral agency of man. In the Divine ordering of human affairs there is perpetual doing and undoing. Life is full of changes and even reverses. And these changes in the mortal lot of mankind come of the purposes and ways of God's providence in His moral discipline of our race. He breaks up the smooth and even tenor of man's earthly life for the sake of turning his eye upward to the overruling hand that shapes all. This is indicated particularly in v. 14, "God doeth it that men should fear before Him." These frequent changes, coming in a way that baffles and defies the best foresight of men, have a most vital bearing on the pursuit of human happiness—especially on that pleasure-seeking pursuit which makes earthly good its supreme and sole end. How vain it must be for man to toil thus intensely to *do*, when God's order of things in

this word involves so much perpetual *undoing* !
H. C.

We have accumulating evidence that the course of history has been directed by a Divine hand. It has not flowed for the shortest distance in a given course fortuitously. Great conquerors and rulers have arisen ; God raised them up as instruments to carry out His purposes. Great nations have appeared, and when the Divine purposes in respect to them have been answered, have disappeared again. J. M. M.—Those revolutions which in their progress precipitate dynasties and nations to the dust, those heaps of ruin which we meet with in the sands of the desert, those majestic remains which the field of human history offers to our reflection, do they not testify aloud to the truth that God is in history ? Gibbon, seated on the ancient capitol, and contemplating its noble ruins, acknowledged the intervention of a superior destiny. He saw—he felt its presence ; wherever his eye turned it met him ; that shadow of a mysterious power reappeared from behind every ruin ; and he conceived the project of depicting its operation in the disorganization, the decline, and the corruption of that power of Rome which had enslaved the nations. Shall not that mighty hand, which this man of admirable genius discovered among the scattered monuments of Romulus and of Marcus Aurelius, the busts of Cicero and Virgil, Trajan's trophies and Pompey's horses, be confessed by us as the hand of our God ? *D'Aubigné*.

Every human soul has a complete and perfect plan cherished for it in the heart of God—a Divine biography marked out, which it enters into life, to live. This life, rightly unfolded, will be a complete and beautiful whole, an experience led on by God and unfolded by His secret nurture ; a Divine study for the man himself and for others ; a study that shall forever unfold in wondrous beauty the love and faithfulness of God ; great in its conception, great in the Divine skill by which it is shaped ; above all, great in the momentous and glorious issues it prepares. What a thought is this for every human soul to cherish ! What dignity does it add to life ! What support does it bring to the trials of life ! What instigations does it add to send us onward in everything that constitutes our excellence ! We live in the Divine thought. We fill a place in the great everlasting plan of God's intelligence. We never sink below His care, never drop out of His counsel. . . . Let it fill thee with cheerfulness and exalted feeling, however deep in obscurity your lot may be, that God is leading you on, girding you for a work,

preparing you to a good that is worthy of His Divine magnificence. If God is really preparing us all to become that which is the very highest and best thing possible, there ought never to be a discouraged or uncheerful being in the world.
H. B.

Know well this truth : of all fixed laws in the universe, the most unalterably fixed is the prevalence of that holy and unchanging will that makes for righteousness—no vague, blind tendency in a fortuitously evolving universe, but the personal will of a personal God, whose eye is now and will evermore be upon you as a person, who claims from you the personal love of your finite being, while He offers you the sustaining, personal love of His infinite personality. In this busy, self-blinded world, wherever God so touches the eyes of a man that he sees clearly this great truth, there is evoked the power that is and ever has been the soul of the world. And without this soul-power, this moral earnestness, this spirit of unselfishness, of what avail is all the progress of our nineteenth century ? What is all this vast body of material wealth, increased production by machinery, facility of intercourse between nations, rapid transit, and electric thought and speech, unless there be the high-souled, noble purpose to animate it ? The world has never seen, the world will never see, " that light which is the master light of all our seeing," save as it flashes down from heaven to earth. From a higher source than self must come that light, that inspiration which is the soul of him who seeks it, and which makes the men who have it the soul of the community in which they dwell. In the proportion in which this soul-life from above, this moral energy that is poured into the lives of men, from the contemplation of the revealed will of God, from the consciousness of personal relations with a personal God who became man and died to save us from ourselves, takes hold upon the rich material life and scientific spirit of this our nineteenth century, in just that proportion will future ages call our age a blessed one. *M. E. Gates*.

1. *To everything—i.e.*, as the sequel shows, to all human actions and conditions. Season used only here and Neh. 2 : 6, Esth. 9 : 27, 31, designates a defined, appointed, or certain time ; it means specially *opportune season* or *time*. The sentiment is, that the *when* and the *where* of all actions and occurrences are constituted and ordained of God. They are not within the power of man, and cannot be controlled by him. What is thus announced here in the way of a general proposition is confirmed by the particu-

lars that follow in vs. 2-8. The series begins with the birth and death of every man, and proceeds with recounting some of the more striking actions and occurrences of human life. M. S.

2. Solomon here mingles events which depend entirely on the will of God with those which seem to depend more upon the will of men, to teach us that the latter class of events is as much subject to His controlling providence as the former. J. M. M.—There is “a time to be born,” and however much a man may dislike the era on which his existence is cast, he cannot help himself; that time is his, and he must make the most of it. There is a time to die; and though we speak of an *untimely* end, no one ever died a moment sooner than God designed, nor lived a moment longer. *Hamilton*.

With respect to the events that may befall us, especially in reference to that great and final event, death, were the period perfectly certain, we should be tempted during the interval to sit down in the indulgence of security. Such knowledge would induce in most men the greatest rashness and presumption. While the event was at a distance they would gratify their appetites without restraint; they would, upon system, procrastinate attention to their eternal interests; whereas the uncertainty of its arrival furnishes the highest reason for being always ready, and renders the neglect of preparation the greatest folly and infatuation. *R. Hall*.

If length of days be thy portion, make it not thy expectation. Reckon not upon long life; think every day the last, and live always beyond thy account. He that so often surviveth his expectation lives many lives, and will scarce complain of the shortness of his days. Approximate thy latter times by present apprehensions of them. And since there is something of us that will still live on, join both lives together, and live in one but for the other. He who thus ordereth the purposes of this life will never be far from the next, and is in some manner already in it, by a happy conformity, and close apprehension of it. *Browne*.—The heavenly Divine life that is communicated by the Spirit of Christ to believers remains entire when the sensitive life is lost. The natural order is, “There is a time to be born, and a time to die.” The supernatural is, there is a time to die, and a time to be born. *Bates*.

3. **Time to break down, . . . to build up.** (By accommodation. B.) In our day, a waking rest of travel, change of scene, new society is permitted, and when it is

a privilege assumed by faithful men to recruit them for their works of duty, they have it by God’s sanction, and even as a part of the sound economy of life. Going after a turn of gayety or dissipation, not after Christian rest, or going after rest only because you are wearied and worried by selfish overdoings, troubled and spent by toils that serve an idol, is a very different matter. The true blessing of rest is on you only when you carry a good mind with you, able to look back on works of industry and faithfulness, suspended for a time, that you may do them more effectively. Going in such a frame, you shall rest awhile, as none but such can rest. Nature will dress herself in beauty to your eye, calm thoughts will fan you with their cooling breath, and the joy of the Lord will be strength to your wasted brain and body. Ah! there is no luxury of indulgence to be compared with this true Christian rest. Money will not buy it, shows and pleasures cannot woo its approach, no conjuration of art or contrived gayety will compass it even for an hour; but it settles, like dew, unsought, upon the faithful servant of duty, bathing his weariness and recruiting his powers for a new engagement in his calling. Go ye thus apart and rest awhile if God permits. H. B.

There is a time to rest. And the chief value of it is not for that jaded muscle or jaded brains; but in giving larger and juster views of life, in recognizing our relations to one another and adjusting them, in evening things up in the life march of battle. When we rest we give our better selves a chance. We give the passions a chance to cool off, and some shy sentiments of our better manhood are given a hearing, which in the whirls of our ambition they never get. Life will be a rounder thing, when to the passion for getting and doing and ruling we add the sweet contentment of being—the sweet nobleness of serving; when to the egoism of self-centring action we add the altruism of benevolence and kindness. To be really great we must take counsel of our whole selves—we must have the tenderness that forbears as well as the bravery that strikes. Let us sit down with ourselves under the trees, where the birds sing and the dust of the world is far away, let us cool our foreheads and ask, “What will it profit a man if he gain the world and lose his soul?” Then in the silence let us insist on our souls, and the gains that come to them, through surrender of world-gains and the rest from world-toils, the gains which, being once our own, shall make toil a constant delight, and, smoothing from our foreheads the lines of care,

shall crown them with that holy peace, which is the sign of right living. *Interior.*

4. There is a *time* when God's providence calls to *weep and mourn*, and when man's wisdom and grace will comply with the call; on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, and then He expects we should *serve Him with joyfulness and gladness of heart*. The time of weeping is put before that of laughter, for we must first *sow in tears* and then *reap in joy*. H.

7. **To keep silence, to speak.** We must have times of solitude and spaces of withdrawal; and we must have the liberty of our own thoughts to keep them back or give them out. To have joys ventilated always by expression—the same expression or the same roundelay of praise—would drug our sensibility and become wearisome beyond endurance. H. B.—There is danger in unwise speech, but there is also danger in unwise silence. When one ought to speak and yet remains silent, silence is absolutely sinful. When one might speak to advantage and yet refrains, silence is culpable and sometimes even cruel. It may be a duty to cry out in alarm, in warning, or in protest; and to fail of so doing may make one a sharer of the unaverted evil. A word of approval or of sympathy may help a crushed or a struggling soul into new life and new achieving of success. S. S. T.—A bitter word may make a wound that will never heal. A kind word may win a friend that will never turn. A caution may save a soul; and yet silence is sometimes more stinging, and at other times more soothing than any word. *Anon.*

To whatever sphere speech belongs, it would seem to stand unsurpassed—nay, unequalled in it—by anything else. If it be a production of nature, it is her last and crowning production, which she reserved for man alone. If it be a work of human art, it would seem to lift the human artist to the level of a Divine Creator. If it is the gift of God, it is God's greatest gift; for through it God spake to man, and man speaks to God in worship, prayer, and meditation. *Max Müller.*—Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together, so that at length they may emerge, full formed and majestic, into the daylight of life, which they are thenceforth to rule. *Carlyle.*

There is a time when silence is the speech of faith. It is the time when the iron of bereavement and other suffering enters into the soul. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it." This silence, which asks not why God did, but is dumb because He did it,

is the highest eloquence of faith. For the instinct of suffering is to ask a reason. Faith consists in neither asking nor answering that terrible "Why?" The highest speech of faith in such an hour is silence. *C. C. Hall.*

9, 10. There is indeed no profit in *that wherein we labor*; the thing itself, when we have it, will do us little good; but if we make a right use of the disposals of Providence about it, there will be profit in that. *I have seen the travail which God has given to the sons of men*, not to make up a happiness by it, but *to be exercised in it*, to have various graces exercised by the variety of events, to have their dependence upon God tried by every change, and to be trained up to it, and taught both *how to want and how to abound*. H.—Here it is distinctly asserted that all the vicissitudes of life are divinely appointed, and are not left to fate or accident, and that Solomon viewed them as all under the direction of God, for the discipline of man. This he makes more clear in the next verse.

11. He asserts that there is a beauty in all the works and ways of Divine Providence. *Beautiful* expresses the true meaning. He is describing how these works and ways strike the mind of a beholder, who surveys them from the true standpoint. He sees how every event takes place at the proper time and fits each into its proper place, carrying forward with a steady movement the great plan of Divine wisdom; and all this vast machinery moving with as much silence as precision and order. He listens, and hears no jar, no grating. "Beautiful!" he exclaims. He next tells us what that true standpoint is, or how it is that man, amid the seeming defeats, disasters, and cross-purposes which surround him, can discover beauty in the mysteries of Divine Providence. God hath placed eternity in his heart, without which he could not understand the work which God doeth from beginning to end, *i.e.*, he hath planted the idea or conviction of immortality in every human heart; and it is in the light of that duration that he sees the perfection and consummate beauty of all God's works and ways. J. M. M.

It may be difficult to define beauty. It may not be important to do so. Indeed, beauty may be simple as truth, and ultimate as the right, and undefinable as either; yet it is none the less real, and is recognized and known by a correlated, sympathetic faculty of the soul. This spiritual faculty or æsthetic sense is native to the human soul. Analysis, as it discovers delicacy and variety of color; regularity and symmetry of form; waving lines and lines of grace; ease and gentleness of motion; purity and nobility of

expression ; the repose of power or the calm of a meek and quiet spirit ; the harmony of poetic numbers or the melody of music ; nicely adjusted order and proportion ; higher than all (if not comprehending all), unity in variety ; and highest of all, the beauty of holiness, whether human, angelic, or Divine—such analysis may illuminate, but it cannot originate the vision of beauty. Conscience may purify and ennoble, but it would not, it cannot, nullify or abrogate this fine and kindred faculty of the soul. And this faculty or æsthetic sense of the soul may be developed by use, strengthened by judicious exercise, improved by proper discipline, quickened, refined, cultivated by careful training. *Thus* it may be brought to recognize more quickly, to feel more sensitively, to know more surely, to comprehend more largely, to understand more thoroughly the spiritual significance of the beautiful, rejecting more and more the sensuous and the sensual, rejoicing more and more in the pure and perfect, communing more habitually and cordially with the true and good. And Divine inspiration would enlarge our view and clarify our vision and unite—re-unite—the ministry of the beautiful with the true and the good. The Scriptures have much to say of beauty. Many of its loveliest and loftiest utterances are upon this exalted theme. We meet with them in Prophecies, and Proverbs, and Psalms, in Gospels and Epistles, in the Parables, in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The theme is not only attractive, but is all comprehensive, *e.g.*, in Ecclesiastes we read, “God hath made everything beautiful in His time.” We read of “the beauty of the Lord our God,” and pray that “it may be upon us ;” of “the beauty of holiness,” and are directed to “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” The divine promise is, “He will beautify the meek with salvation.” The prophet declares of Messiah the Prince that He shall “appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning ;” and of him who walketh righteously and turneth away his eyes from beholding evil, that “he shall see the King in His beauty,” “who is the chiefest among ten thousand and the One that is altogether lovely.” And the promise transcendent is, “When He shall appear we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is”—a beauty and blessedness including yet surpassing even a home in the New Jerusalem and the mansions in heaven. Thus the Divine Word with inspired vision ranges all the realms of beauty, material and mental, moral and spiritual, human and Divine. Prophets and

apostles, the Psalmist and the Saviour, each and all point to the beautiful as valid and valuable, and present us ideals that are pure and purifying—related evermore to the true and the good. *R. B. Welch.*

God has placed us in a world that witnesses of Him in two ways. It is a world of manifold and most marvellous contrivances, and exhibits Him as a mechanic of extraordinary skill and power, working, moreover, with the manifest design of advancing man's bodily and social interests. It is also a world of intense and varied beauty and sublimity, so arranged as, in a certain sense, to give us an adumbration of Him, “a revelation of the character of God in the way of material type and similitude.” The beauty which some would elevate into a religion is no religion in itself, but it speaks of a God, who has impressed on nature as far as was possible shadows of His attributes. It speaks of His perfection, of His glory, of His worthiness to absorb us and fill us with a passion of love. To rest in beauty without going further and tracing it to its source is to stop short where God intended us to reach forward. It is to forget that though the sublimity and beauty of nature may please the imagination and even refine and exalt it, they cannot in themselves affect the soul or change the heart. It is only when we “look through nature up to nature's God” that we reach the real teachings of nature, and hear her true voice. *G. R.*

There is a chord in the human heart to which the beautiful and sublime respond, whether these appear in the material or spiritual world. If we could only take men away for a little out of the dull, dead round, and from the corroding and often debasing things that draw them down in their common life, there are objects such as these appealing to them daily and hourly, and asking them if they have not a soul. Rich sunsets and moonlit skies are there, requiring only eyes to see them, and acts of self-devotion and heroism are being performed, and lives of patient suffering led, under our sight, which are as capable of thrilling as anything recorded in history. *Ker.*

We see an incalculable amount of things fitted to give enjoyment—useful things, beautiful things, sublime things ; things grateful to the ear, to the sight, to the soul ; pleasant lights and shadows ; sweet perfumes and sounds ; golden grains and fruits ; lovely features, forms, flowers, landscapes ; glorious rivers and cataracts and mountains and oceans and skies—in thronging hosts which no arithmetic can compute. Further, mixed up with this natural

good is a great amount of such as is of a still higher nature. There are many fair and noble spiritual qualities revealing themselves within our observation or knowledge; there are generous impulses and affections, exalted patiences, fortitudes, heroisms, magnanimities; above all, pure solid Christian virtue in very many incontestable and even glorious instances, the record of which thrills us as we read. If, then, we hold God responsible for the sorrows, disorders, and other disadvantages of the world, it is but fair to give Him credit for the happiness and virtue, and manifold advantages that exist. If one class of facts is allowed to argue against a good God, then the other class must be allowed to argue in His favor. And confessedly, the happiness of the world is far greater than its sorrow; almost every living creature has a thousand moments of comfort to one moment of pain. Confessedly, the noxious things, the deformed things, the things that wound the senses and the æsthetical nature, bear no sensible proportion to the useful, the comely, the gratifying things that be-green and be-blossom this beautiful world. *Burr.*

We cannot look round us without being struck by the surprising variety and multiplicity of the sources of beauty of creation, produced by form, or by color, or by both united. It is scarcely too much to say that every object in nature, animate or inanimate, is in some manner beautiful; so largely has the Creator provided for our pleasures through the sense of sight. It is one of the revelations which the Creator has made of Himself to man. He was to be admired and loved; it was through the demonstrations of His character that we could alone see Him and judge of Him; and in thus inducing or compelling us to admire and love the visible works of His hand, He has taught us to love and adore Himself. *Macculloch.*

Christian thought and feeling may appropriate to its own high uses all that is noble in taste and beautiful in art, and, by the inner transforming power of devotion, ennoble and spiritualize these outer things. Nay, religion, in one sense, asserts its right to all that is beautiful and noble and lovely on earth, and by its regal touch confers on earthly things a heavenly dignity. There are ways in which all the treasures of genius, all the creations of poetry, all the resources of art, may be made tributary to the cause of Christ. Still, it should never be forgotten that the refinements of art may become not the means, but the end. *Caird.*—Surely beauty is a good, for it is the Divine handiwork. Surely that living God who has made

the sea like amethyst and the body of heaven like paved work of a sapphire stone, who has filled the groves with song, and embroidered the meadows with flowers, and clothed the mountain with garments of glory, he who has planted in man the secret spring of music and planned that delicate organism which vibrates so sensitively to the breath of pleasure, He would not have us stand blind and deaf and dumb in the midst of His fair universe. He framed man for delight in loveliness. He gifted him with power to imitate and interpret and idealize works of nature in human art. He claimed the services of these faculties in the decoration of His own most sacred temple. And he has forever reminded us, in the words of Christ, that the beauty of the world is a Divine creation, and that the very raiment of the lilies is woven and colored by the hand of God. Christianity has no room in it for asceticism, for a silent, sullen, downcast, unbeautiful existence. Let us bring beauty into our lives; but let it be the beauty of holiness. Let us make our churches and our homes fair as well as pure, bright as well as good. Let us accept the gracious ministry of art as a service to our higher nature, and use it to adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour. *Van Dyke.*

We do not sufficiently dwell upon the moral and spiritual uses of beauty in God's universe. That everywhere His loving, wooing hand should touch the flower into grace and deck all barren places with glory and with fairness—what does *that* reveal to us about Him? It says to us, He does not give scantily; it is not the mere measure of what is wanted, absolutely needed to support a bare existence, that God bestows. He taketh pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. Joy, and love, and beauty, belong to Him; and the smile upon His face that comes from the contemplation of His own fairness flung out into His glorious creation is a prophecy of the gladness that comes into His heart from His own holiness and more ethereal beauty adorning the spiritual creatures whom He has made to flash back His likeness. The flowers of the field are so clothed that we may learn the lesson that it is a fair Spirit and a loving Spirit, a bountiful Spirit and a royal heart that presides over the bestowments of creation and allots gifts to men. A. M.—*He hath made everything beautiful.* But nothing is so “beautiful” in His sight as the heart that trusts and loves Him. He has made the laws of fitness and of grace to be steadfast and sacred; but he tells us that all the outward graces of propriety and art are but dim symbols of the clustering group

of spiritual graces that His own immediate Spirit makes to bud and unfold and yield their ripened fruitage in the believing soul of man. F. D. H.

11. *To set eternity in their heart* means to give them the faculty of considering and being moved by the past and the future. As to the word "olam," interpreters are divided between two meanings. "Eternity," not as metaphysically conceived, but in the sense of a long, indefinite period of time, in accordance with the use of the word throughout this book and the rest of the Old Testament. Delitzsch says, "God has placed in the inborn constitution of man the capability of conceiving of eternity, the struggle to apprehend the everlasting, the longing after an eternal life." The other meaning is "the world," or the universe in which we dwell. With this meaning the context is explained as referring either to the knowledge of the objects in this world, or to the love of its pleasures. This meaning seems to be less in harmony with the context than the other; but the principal objection to it is that it assigns to the word (olam) a sense which it never bears in the language of the Old Testament. W. T. B.—Gesenius defines it, "*remote time, eternity, everlasting.*" Hengstenberg says it is "never used in the entire Old Testament in any other sense than of 'unmeasured time' and of 'eternity;' and in this book above all is it employed in the signification 'eternity.'" Y.

No other meaning but that of a duration the end or beginning of which is hidden from us, and which therefore is infinite, is ever connected with this word in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and this is its uniform sense in this book. We must translate, as the nearest equivalent, *He hath set eternity* (or, *the everlasting*) *in their heart*. Man has the sense of an order perfect in its beauty. He has also the sense of a purpose working through the ages from everlasting to everlasting, but "beginning" and "end" are alike hidden from him, and he fails to grasp it. E. H. P.

I translate, "God hath done (and is ever doing) everything beautifully in its season; also, He hath put eternity in their heart, without which man will not (or, cannot) find out the work that God doeth from beginning to end." That is, he hath given man the thought or idea of eternity, and without its aid no man could ever understand these works of God in providence in all their just and far-reaching relations. For these providential agencies of God in their plans and results reach onward into eternity. They lap over from this world into

the next, unfinished here, to be completed there. Retribution for the deeds of earth, beginning sometimes here, is to be finished there. The frustration of human plans for time has an outlook to the hopeful compensations of eternity. "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and therefore are wise in God's plan and well for His children. Hence there is no understanding the ways of God here save as you take into the account their bearings upon the destiny that awaits men there. All the other words in this passage conspire to sustain this interpretation. The first word, "also," implies something more of the same sort. This corresponds with the construction which I suggest. God hath done two things of kindred bearing and significance—viz.: First, He hath done everything in His providence most beautifully and fitly in its time; secondly, He hath *also* put in man's heart the idea of eternity, without which man could not find out either the wisdom or the love of these works of God's providence from beginning to end—an other gift to man quite analogous to the former gift of a well-ordered course of Providence. First, to ordain a course of providential dealings wisely; and, secondly, to give man the idea of eternity, so that he can understand what would otherwise seem to him inexplicable and perhaps unjust—these two things complement each other, and fill out the plan of God for revealing Himself and His ways to men. Further, the words rendered, "so that," which express the relation between God's giving man the idea of eternity and man's not finding out God's works perfectly, have for their first and legitimate sense, *without which*. That is, without this idea of eternity man neither will nor can find out God's work fully. Finally, the construction above suggested and defended corresponds admirably with the qualifying clause, "find out the work that God doeth *from the beginning to the end*;" for, without the idea of eternity, man might find out some of God's works and ways, at least in some of their bearings and relations. But those methods of God's providential government over men which embrace the moral discipline of suffering here, correlated to glorious compensation there; or His long-suffering endurance with sin here, to be set right at last by swift and just retribution there, can by no means be understood by the human mind save with the aid of this idea of eternity. Whenever we take in the whole range of those far-reaching plans of God which stretch "from the beginning to the end," we must have eternity in our

hearts; and hence He has given it. Thus every several point—I might say every *word* of this passage—harmonizes admirably with the construction above given, leaving, it would seem, nothing more in the way of sustaining proof to be desired. H. C.

I believe that God has set eternity in the hearts of men, as the royal preacher declared when discoursing on the vanity of all earthly good; that God made man an image of His own eternity, as the author of the Book of Wisdom affirmed; and that without such a postulate human life becomes a hollow mockery and a biting irony. It is a wondrous unanimity of intuitive conviction that meets us in the tombs of Egypt and the temples of China, in the hieroglyphics of Assyria and the Indian legends, and in the world's profoundest thinkers in Greece, Rome, and Palestine. There is a swing in the soul's thought that carries it beyond what it can prove in the affirmation of its own dignity and destiny. *Behrends.*—Man's real dignity and supremacy lies in this, that he is made for immortality; that he is capacious of the Divine; that he has relations to the infinite and the eternal; that his present state is but the vestibule of his being; and that when his journey through this toilsome and hazardous waste of earth shall have been accomplished he shall, provided he have worthily achieved his probation, reach the proper home and resting-place of his spirit in heaven. W. L. A.

The sense of immortality is deepened by all that brings the personal soul consciously face to face with the personal God who made it. The sense of immortality is deepened by penitence; for penitence is the sincere exercise of memory upon our past existence, under the guidance of the love of God. It is deepened by prayer; for prayer is the voice of the inmost soul consciously speaking to its God. It is stimulated by acts of self-sacrifice, which kindle into intense consciousness the immortal germ of life, though they may for awhile depress, at the bidding of eternal principles, its earthly timent. It prompts and is strengthened by a genuine love of man as man. Doing justice to the greatness of human destiny, it has no heart to dwell upon the accidents of birth, or station, or income, or accomplishments which overlie the mighty reality upon which alone its gaze is persistently fixed. But it attains its greatest strength, it prepares for its loftiest triumphs, at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, since the agony of the Divine Victim reveals the price and yields the measure of the life of the human soul. Thus they who, like David, have gazed on the

dying Redeemer by the light of prophecy, or who, like Paul, in the full sunshine of the Gospel, have determined "to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified" have enjoyed in the highest degree the sense of immortality. H. P. L.

The more profoundly we feel the reality of the great eternity whither we are being drawn, the greater do all things here become. They are made less in their power to absorb or trouble, but they are made infinitely greater in importance as preparations for what is beyond. How absurd, how monotonous, how trivial it all is, all this fret and fume, all these dying joys and only less fleeting pains, all this mill-horse round of work which we pace, unless we are, mill-horse-like, driving a shaft that goes *through the wall*, and grinds something that falls into "bags that wax not old" on the other side. The end makes the means important; and if we believe that God is preparing us for immortal life with Him by all our work, then we shall do it with a will; otherwise we may well be languid as we go on for thirty or forty years, some of us doing the same trivial things, and getting nothing out of them but food, occupation of time, and a mechanical aptitude for what is not worth doing. But when we see that all paths lead to heaven, and that our eternity is affected by our acts in time, then it is blessed to gaze, it is possible to love the earthly shadows of the uncreated beauty, it is worth while to work. A. M.

God hath set eternity in our hearts. He has given us a hunger which can be satisfied only with the Bread of Life, a thirst which can be quenched only by the living water from the Rock of Ages. Eternity is in our hearts, and there is a strange contrast between it and the world in which we all are, for which alone some of us are living. To do our duty here, to trust calmly in a future with God, where all our higher cravings shall be satisfied—that was the conclusion at which the Preacher arrived as the sustaining power amid the wrongs, and weariness, and inequalities of life. We stand with that great teacher in the twilight, but *our* faces are turned toward the rising Sun. God hath set eternity in our hearts. Are we living worthy of it? *Anon.*

12. Over and above the life of honest labor and simple joys which had been recognized as good before, the seeker has learned that "doing good" is in some sense the best way of getting good. E. H. P.—**To rejoice, and to do good.** The pleasure of doing good remains after a thing is done, the thoughts of it

lie easy in our minds, and the reflection upon it ministers to us ever after joy and delight. In this passage Solomon, after all his experience of wordly pleasures, pitches at last upon this as the greatest happiness of human life, and the only good use which is to be made of a prosperous fortune. *Archbishop Tillotson.*—What have we our beings, capacities, and estates for but to be some way serviceable to our generation? We mistake if we think we were born for ourselves; no, it is our business *to do good*, it is in that that there is the truest pleasure, and what is so laid out is best laid up and will turn to the best account. Observe, it is *to do good in this life*, which is short and uncertain; we have but a little time to be doing good in, and, therefore, had need to redeem time. Every man's life is his opportunity of doing that which will make for him in eternity. H.

If you labor to create good company in this life by trying to make other people round you good, you shall enjoy forever in the next world the good company which you have helped to make. If you labor to make yourself good in this life, you shall enjoy the fruit of your labor in the next life by being good, and, therefore, blessed forever. Your labor is not vanity and vexation of spirit. It is solid work, which shall receive solid pay from God hereafter. *Kingsley.*

—The wish falls often warm upon my heart that I may learn nothing here that I cannot continue in the other world; that I may do nothing here but deeds that will bear fruit in heaven. *Richter.*

Whatever apparent incompatibility there may be between having a residence in one world and a conversation in another, the religion of Christ boldly meets that difficulty and puts it out of the way. A life which reconciles these contradictory things is not only possible, but is the practical object and the triumph of every Christian man. We can be busy, neighborly, charitable, enterprising, getting our livelihood, making some earthly spot more beautiful as well as more righteous, and all the time “looking for and hastening unto” an immortality infinitely better—wearing on our whole manhood or womanhood the stamp of a consecrated purpose and an unworldly secret in the soul. No man living to himself, no man dying to himself, life and death are both transfigured by an indestructible communion with an invisible Friend and Lord. We can, by the Spirit's help, be *in* the world without “minding” earthly things selfishly, greedily, ambitiously, or irreligiously. F. D. H.

Be helpful! Communicate ideas! Give out

moral energy! Let the light we have shine! We do not lose moral or intellectual power by giving an impulse to our neighbor. Here is the difference between mechanical forces and intellectual, moral, social forces. If you give your neighbor a “cut-off” with half the electric current that lights your house or runs your factory, your own house must go half-lighted, your own factory can do but half its work. But when you give him your best thought and your heartiest, friendliest sympathy, there is more light, more warmth, more power for you both. By giving, you gain! Your own thoughts become clearer. Your own conviction is more intense. Your own power of right feeling and right willing is strengthened. By such unselfish efforts for others we keep the horizon broader and the heart fresher. To do such service we shall need a steady fire of love in the heart. To overcome inertia in ourselves and in others; not to be overawed and silenced by the numbers of the dull, the timid, and the vicious, who oppose all changes for the better; to make our way up steep grades of moral progress; to draw our load steadily every day, and with our own burdens to bear also the burdens of others less strong than we—this calls for an impelling power constantly renewed and unfailing. *M. E. Gates.*

13. Recognizes the fact that God has provided for us sources of physical enjoyment in our daily bread, and in the consciousness of power and success in producing desired results. These are *gifts* of God to men. An infinite Father to us, He delights to see His children enjoying His bounty, and with humble acknowledgment and grateful love exercising the powers of labor and acquisition which He has bestowed. A just sense of our relations and obligations to God will guard us against the gross and grievous mistake of living to eat and drink, and thus of eating and drinking so as to debase ourselves even below irrational animals. Hence while commending the moderate enjoyments of our constitutional appetites, Solomon continually suggests the thought that these enjoyments come to us from God, our Great Father. H. C.—Let us make ourselves easy, *rejoice and enjoy the good of our labor, as it is the gift of God*, and so enjoy God in it and taste His love, return Him thanks, and make Him the centre of our joy; *eat and drink to His glory, and serve Him with joyfulness of heart in the abundance of all things.* Grace and wisdom to do this *is the gift of God*, and it is a good gift, which crowns the gifts of His providential bounty. H.

14. It is a thought worthy of Almighty God

that everything He touches partakes of His own immortality; that He cannot lay to His hand in vain; that what has once lain in His counsels must one day, sooner or later, stand out into the light, and that which once has taken form under His power must go on forever. *J. Vaughan.*—And God rules thus with supreme authority and with a wisdom all His own and a steadfastness of purpose that no created being can change, *in order that men may fear before Him.* Such majesty and such immutability in wisdom, justice, and love, become the infinite throne of the universe. It is altogether well that the universe has such a Father, such a Ruler, such a God! H. C.

Permanence and perfection are the two grand qualities of all God's works. Man's work at best is only imperfect and unenduring. The effect of a studious and earnest contemplation of God's work is to make men "fear before Him." To see that it is essentially unchanging through all the mutations of human affairs, and that it can neither be improved by addition nor subtraction, overwhelms us with awe. *Pierson.*—The works of God are distinguished by *opportuneness of development and precision of purpose.* There is a season for each of them, and each comes in its season. All of them have a function to fulfil, and they fulfil it. To which he here adds that they are all of their kind *consummate*—so perfect that no improvement can be made, and, left to themselves, they will be perpetual. How true is this regarding God's greatest work, redemption! What more could He have done to make it a great salvation than what He had already done? or what feature of the glorious plan could we afford to want? And now that He has Himself pronounced it a "finished" work, what is there that man can put to it?—what is there he dare take from it? And in doing it He has done it "forever." *Hamilton.*

15. *Requireth for judgment,* as the word specially means in 2 Sam. 4 : 11; Ezek. 3 : 18, etc. It is obvious from vs. 14, 16, and 17 that this is the meaning here. The meaning of the verse is that there is a connection between events past, present, and future, and that this connection exists in the justice of God, who controls all W. T. B.

God requireth the past for *our present consolation.* He takes up all we have left behind in the plenitude of His existence. The friends who have gone from us live in Him; the days that are no more are revived in Him. The successive periods of our existence, like lights and shadows on a sunny hill, have not perished in

the using; their fleeting moments and impressions have been laid up forever in the storehouse of the infinite mind. In converse with Him in whom thus all our life is hid, upon whose mind the whole picture of our existence is mirrored, we feel that, though lonely, we are not alone; though the perishing creatures of a day, we are living even now in eternity. God requireth the past for *its restoration.* As the context indicates, it is a law of the Divine manifestation, a mode of the Divine working in every department, that the past should be brought forward into the present, the old reproduced in the new. God never wearies of repeating the old familiar things. He keeps age after age, generation after generation, year after year, the same old home-feeling in His earth for us. And is not this a strong argument that He will keep the old home-feeling for us in heaven; that we shall find ourselves beyond the river of death in the midst of all the former familiar things of our life, just as when we get out of the winter gloom and desolation of any year we find ourselves in the midst of all that made the former springs and summers so sweet and precious to us? God requireth the past for *judgment.* It is an awful thought that the indictment of the impenitent sinner at the bar of Divine justice has been carried about with him unconsciously all his life in his own bosom, that he himself is the strongest witness against himself. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked and slothful servant." *Macmillan.*

All things are to come up again. Nor are they to come up merely for judgment; they are to come up again also for life. They are to come up as seed comes up in harvest. They are to come up as elements of character. Men have been and are now everywhere putting into the furrows of their being the germs of what they are to be, to do, or to suffer hereafter. They are germs of indestructible activity and power. They are habits and elements whose roots strike here, but whose life and fruits are to fill eternity. Men write their future in their present, not only because God keeps the record of their past and will judge it, but because God hath made their present time their spring-time; and present character, character between the cradle and the grave, determines the eternal character. So all things are to come up, as elements of joy or grief, comfort or disappointment. Thoughts, things, words, feelings, experiences, knowledges, forms of discipline, losses, adversities, trials, blessings, enjoyments, opportunities, privileges, neglects, omissions, prayers, efforts, struggles, failures, successes—

all things are to come up ; in themselves for judgment, in their consequences for existence, for experience, for the life of life, or the life of death, for life *in* life, or life *in* death, forever ! For God requireth it. *Cheever*.

I feel assured that there is no such thing as *forgetting* possible to the mind. A thousand accidents may and will interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscriptions on the mind ; accidents of the same sort will also rend away this veil ; but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains forever, just as the stars seem to withdraw before the common light of day, whereas, in fact, we all know that it is the light which is drawn over them as a veil, and that they are waiting to be revealed when the obscuring daylight shall have withdrawn. *De Quincey*.—There is both proof and instance that relics of sensation may exist for an indefinite time in a latent state in the very same order in which they were originally impressed ; it is even probable that all thoughts are in themselves imperishable, and if the intelligent faculty should be rendered more comprehensive it would require only a different and apportioned organization—the body celestial instead of the body terrestrial, to bring before the human soul the *collective experience of its whole past existence*. And this—this, perchance, is the dread Book of Judgment, in whose mysterious hieroglyphics every idle word is recorded. *Coleridge*.

16, 17. The sixteenth and seventeenth verses bring out the great doctrine of a future judgment in all its force and clearness. He saw “under the sun,” in this world, “the place of judgment, that wickedness was there ; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.” He saw earthly judges partial and unrighteous—wronging the innocent, and clearing the guilty. And God seems to be like them, if we look no further than *this world*. But this leads Solomon to the great utterance of his heart in the seventeenth verse : “I said *in mine heart*, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked.” The great idea is here *fully* brought out, for which he had been preparing the minds of his hearers—viz. : Since there is incompleteness, and crookedness, and sorrow, and apparent injustice under the sun, and man labors in vain if his prospects terminate with this life, there *must* be a future judgment of the righteous and the wicked ; there *is* a future judgment. Y.

We are told often and confidently that the ancient Hebrews had no idea of a future state and a future judgment, and therefore Coheleth could have no reference to either. What then

did the Hebrews think had become of Enoch and Elijah, after their translation ? What is the meaning of being *gathered to one's fathers* ? (Gen. 49 : 29 ; Jud. 2 : 10) Then what means, “In Thy *presence* is fulness of joy ; at Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore” ? (Psalm 16 : 11.) What shall we say of Psalm 17 : 15, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake in Thy likeness” ? And Daniel, what means he when he tells us that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” ? Here is not only *futurity*, but a *resurrection* of the body itself. Isaiah, too, has added his testimony : “Thy dead men shall live ; with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust [*i.e.*, ye dead] ; for Thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out [*bring forth*, in the Hebrew] the dead” (26 : 19). Beautiful imagery this, in which the grave is represented, like the grass on which dew falls, as fructiferous, and bringing forth its dead as the fruit. This is now generally admitted to refer to the *resurrection*. And when the Saviour says respecting the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that “He is not the God of the *dead*, but of the *living*,” does not He suppose the Jews, with whom He was reasoning, to believe in a future state ? How can any man reasonably suppose that the Hebrews, with Moses and Samuel and David, Solomon and Isaiah, and other highly distinguished men to teach them, and above all if we believe them to have been *inspired*—that the Jewish nation knew less than the Egyptian and other heathen nations around them about a future state of existence ? Still, I would not claim for Coheleth more than his book will justify. Those who find *Gospel-clearness* in the Old Testament on such subjects seem to forget that Paul has assigned to the Gospel of Christ the high prerogative of “bringing life and immortality to light.” It has brought out into noonday splendor what before was seen only in the twilight. M. S.

18-20. One common law of physical mortality reigns over both man and beast. Each alike receive their bodies from the dust of the earth, and give them back to their mother earth. Considered closely with reference to this part of our being, man has no pre-eminence above a beast. This close construction is obviously demanded by the course of thought—“all go to one place”—the earth ; all are made of dust, and all return to it again. This must refer to the body only. H. C.—The thought implied is that without a higher faith of some kind, man

stands as having only an animal life, on the same level as other animals.

20. All go to one place. The "place" thus spoken of is simply the earth, as at once the mother, the nourisher, and the sepulchre of every form of life. E. H. P.

A worldly, earthly-minded *man has no pre-eminence above the beast, for all that which he sets his heart upon, places his confidence and expects a happiness in, is vanity.* Most men live as if they were to be here always, or as if, when they die, there were an end of them; and it is not strange that those live like beasts who think they shall die like beasts; but on such the noble faculties of reason are perfectly lost and thrown away. H.—There are those who lead the life of the ephemeron, in whom there is nothing immortal, spending their days like the beasts that perish—nay, less fitted for eternity than they. No deep thoughts, no acts fought out on deep abiding principles, have been theirs. They live mere accidental beings, light mortals who dance their giddy round above the abysses, looking at the things seen, with transient tears for sorrow and transient smiles for joy. This life is their all, and at last they have fluttered out their time and go forth into endless night. F. W. R.

21. This passage does not deny but, on the contrary, affirms that the spirit of man goes upward to God, who gave it, while the spirit of beasts goes downward to the earth, becoming (as the passage seems to imply) extinct with the dissolution of the body. But in the words "Who knoweth?" the writer assumes that many things respecting the spirit of man and the spirit of beasts were yet unknown. It seems plain that the ancient people of God had from the first this general idea, that the souls of the good at death return to God to dwell in His presence with all who have gone before in purity and blessedness. See Psalms 17 : 15 ; 16 : 11 ; 73 : 24, 25 ; Gen. 15 : 15 ; 25 : 8 ; 49 : 29, 33, and 37 : 35, which last passage shows that this being gathered to one's people was not merely the burial of the body in a common grave. Inasmuch as this is the obvious and usual sense of Solomon's words in this passage, and inasmuch as he certainly avows this sentiment in his last chapter, it must be reasonable to assume that this is his meaning here. H. C.

22. The same sentiment above, in chaps. 3 : 12, 13 ; 2 : 24—*his doings*, all his actions and efforts. Let each one take all the enjoyment which his efforts can secure. Rational and moderate enjoyment, not epicureanism, is doubtless to be understood here. Confining our view merely

to the world of sense, this advice is beyond all doubt correct and proper. Every being instinctively desires enjoyment, and Coheleth would have him secure what he can derive from his efforts, but to enjoy it with moderation and caution. To satisfy our innocent natural appetites and supply our wants is all to which we can attain in the present world. This he urges all to do in order, as it plainly seems, that they may be more contented, happy, and cheerful. M. S.

The conclusions to which the author arrives at the various stages of his argument show clearly that a secondary theme—subordinate to the vanity of earthly pleasure—was *the real good which God does give man to enjoy in this mortal state.* Remarkably he carries along these two great themes—how to abuse the world and make it a worthless vanity, and how to use it so as to get its real good most effectively. H. C.

All highest values resolve themselves into personal relations and personal considerations. Instead of the question, "For *what* do you mean to live?" let me ask you the supreme, all-inclusive question, "For *whom* do you mean to live?" To this question the tenor of every man's life gives no uncertain answer. Whether he knows it himself or not, his life sends out an answer, clear enough to his fellow-men. The answer, consciously or unconsciously given by every man's life, vibrates full and strong to the keynote of one of these three brief replies: "I mean to live for myself," "I mean to live for my fellow-men," "I mean to live for God." And the last answer is the right answer. He who once sees its force knows well that it includes the second, which may be the mistaken effort of a noble soul striving to rise to the correct answer. This reply cuts the very central nerve of purpose of the first reply. He who lives for God will find himself irresistibly impelled to the best and widest service of his fellow-men. He who lives for self, however carefully he may strive to strengthen his position by maxims of worldly prudence or of a utilitarian philosophy, fails ignominiously of all the highest ends of living.

Reckon from self as a centre, and your fellow-men become your obnoxious rivals in a stern struggle for existence and advancement. Ambition's law of life becomes the blood-stained survival of the fittest, and the highest glories which life can give you in their hollow and transitory splendor will be yours but for a tremulous moment, until the younger, the more vig-

orous, the more fortunate shall thrust you aside, and for his brief moment wear the bubble you strove for until your selfish life went out in nothingness. Reckon from God as a centre, and your fellow-men become your brothers. They are infinitely worthy of your loving interest, since one Father has made all our spirits after His image, and one Saviour has died to redeem from sin and restore to godlikeness all who will turn to Him, even the most debased. Thus reckoning God as the centre, the law of loving service and self-abnegation becomes the law of your life. And you will do the best for yourself intellectually and morally when you give yourself to the service of God, in the service of your fellow-men. Thus living, the feverish strain will be taken out of the hot, panting rivalries of life. The success of all good and true men will be your success. And if the spirit of Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, possess your souls, failure for you will be impossible. The very effort for others' welfare and for the defence of righteousness, which may exhaust your vital powers, will assure your deathless victory, your true success.

M. E. Gates.

Verse 11. *He hath made everything beautiful.*

Mr. Darwin asks us to believe that the beautiful adaptations in nature are not in the least due to *design*, but to *the slow operations and decisions of natural selection*, if indeed there can be decision without design. The very colors which man most admires are, according to this school of theorists, in no way representative of *purpose*. That the sky is blue and not scarlet, that the leaves of the landscape are not yellow and the soil not crimson, are the chance evolutions of this mysterious *something*, which has neither intelligence nor beginning of days. The mere suggestion that all this wealth of beauty in varied colors, and proportion in form, and gracefulness of movement, and the tint of the atmosphere, are in any respect an end and not accidental, Mr. Darwin resentfully rejects. They are with him no part of a *plan*, nor are they *intended* to please. It is really difficult to believe in the possibility of such convictions as are seriously asserted. "Some naturalists," he says, "believe that very many structures have been created for beauty in the eyes of men, or for mere variety. This doctrine, if true, would be absolutely fatal to my theory." It comes to this, that the theory which we are asked to accept instead of that record in the first chapter of Genesis is one which gives beauty without

an end, laws without an author, works without a maker, and co-ordination without design. He excludes from creation the idea of intended beauty. Man's history began, he knows not how, millions of millions of years ago, in that first germ of life out of which have been developed all plants and animals, by those processes, complicated and undefinable, which transpired, until, at last, he rose on the theatre of life, its crown and glory, "fearfully made" in body and still more mysteriously framed in spirit. With what majestic comprehensiveness and precision must natural selection have guided all processes and struggles, when the lowest lichen or simplest spore has risen to be the apple-tree, the peach, the plum, the nectarine, the wheat, the thyme, and the other grains and herbs necessary for man just before he came; with what precision have the lowest worms risen to be the fishes, the birds, and the quadrupeds he most needed; and with what astonishing parallel exactness have the chemical processes kept pace with all other movements in earth, and sea, and sky, when, in the use of the soil, in the structure of plants, in their form, in their foliage, in their flowers, there issued at last the distribution of those very forms and colors which not only most conduce to man's comfort, but most gratify his taste! In separate spheres and without connection; in the inorganic masses of the globe; in plant and animal life; in the atmosphere and in the heavens; through long, fitful, imperfect, and frequently unfinished processes, natural selection has thus been at work, and without a purpose, or design, or end in any shape, has given to the world its present wondrous structure, and to all life its present subtle characters! Does not this whole theory draw excessively on our imagination, and raise difficulties incomparably greater than all those which rationalism has conjured up against the miracles of the Bible? *W. Fraser.*

Order is heaven's first law, and the second is like unto it, that everything serves an end. This is the sum of all science. These are the two mites, even all that she hath, which she throws into the treasury of the Lord; and as she does so in faith, Eternal Wisdom looks on and commends the deed. *M' Cosh.*

Verse 11. Eternity in their heart. V. 21. The spirit goeth upward.

The conception of our own *immortality*, the thought that the present is to us but a part and the beginning of the endless, is incomparably

the most stupendous and quickening thought that pertains to our conscious experience. Immortality in us, eternity to be experienced by us, immortality already begun, only to be fully taken on in the world to come, eternity already entered upon, only to be fully realized when time's brief term is finished—this is the grand fact that broods over us, vast as the firmament above, as we, unmindful, unlooking, work on beneath. *Realized* ever so imperfectly, the fact of immortality clothes *all truth* with sublimity, and invests it with power. It compels the conviction of God Himself as a reality, and gives to His revealed character and sovereignty their sublime force over our souls. It is the imbedded sense of immortality that imparts vividness and energy to every Divine motive and influence, that makes the Word of God convincing to the understanding, constraining to the conscience and the heart, and directive to the will. It is the knowledge of immortality that suggests the only solution to the apparent incompleteness of present events and issues—that explains existing

mysteries, that fills out and makes coherent man's earthly life as a plan of God, symmetric, harmonious, and perfect. It is the fact of immortality that reveals the true uses and worth of time, and that gives it intense meaning and solemnity. From this consciously underlying fact probation derives its immeasurable significance, death borrows its dread or hope, and the coming of the Son of man to judgment impresses its tremendous power of motive. Probation ends, and death stands in the gateway of *eternity*, and *there* the judgment establishes a forever unchangeable character and state of the soul. Thus everything connected with our life bears upon eternity. Every event, every experience, every act of our mortal being, every influence we receive, every motive we feel, from the providence, the Word, and the Spirit of God, takes its meaning, derives its worth and force from the fact of our immortality. And to the observant, thoughtful, reverent mind all presage and affirm in distinct, solemn tone, "*This mortal must put on immortality!*" B.

CHAPTER IV.

1 THEN I returned and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun : and behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter ; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but
2 they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive ;
3 yea, better than them both *did I esteem* him which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.
4 Then I saw all labour and every skilful work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This also is vanity and a
5 striving after wind. The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.
6 Better is an handful with quietness, than two handfuls with labour and striving after wind.
7 Then I returned and saw vanity under the
8 sun. There is one that is alone, and he hath not a second ; yea, he hath neither son nor brother ; yet is there no end of all his labour, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches. For whom then, *saith he*, do I labour, and

deprive my soul of good ? This also is vanity, yea, it is a sore travail. Two are better than one ; because they have a good reward
10 for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow : but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth : but how
11 can one be warm *alone* ? And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him ; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.
13 Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who knoweth not how
14 to receive admonition any more. For out of prison he came forth to be king ; yea, even
15 in his kingdom he was born poor. I saw all the living which walk under the sun, that they were with the youth, the second, that
16 stood up in his stead. There was no end of all the people, even of all them over whom he was : yet they that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

Chap. 4. HAVING arrived in chap. 3 : 22 at a partial answer to his question (3 : 9 ; 1 : 3)—

viz., that there is positive good (*i.e.*, a portion) in that satisfaction which is found in working,

Solomon now turns to the case of such happiness being interrupted and reduced to vanity by various contingencies—by oppression (vs. 1-3), by envy (vs. 4-6), by loneliness (vs. 7-12), by decay of working power (vs. 13-16); the first two instances seem taken from the lower ranks of life, the last two from the higher.

1. Some readers have been surprised that instances of injustice and misery, such as are here described, should have occurred in the happy reign of Solomon; and such passages as 3 : 16; 4 : 1, and 5 : 8 have been used as an argument in favor of the hypothesis that the book was written at a later time, *e.g.*, when Palestine was ruled by a governor deputed by the Persian kings. These cases, however, represent only a small portion of the condition of the people described in Ecclesiastes. They cannot be separated from the much more numerous descriptions of wealth, abundance, and enjoyment which would suit no age so well as that of Solomon. Indeed the condition of the people described here and in the Book of Proverbs is one in which a great deal of external prosperity is mixed with a certain amount of violence and injustice. If in Proverbs such passages as chap. 3 : 10 be compared with chap. 3 : 31; or chap. 22 : 1, 2 with chap. 22 : 16, 22, the *whole* picture seems to be so much like that which is given in Ecclesiastes, that both descriptions will be recognized as appropriate to the same age. Moreover, the happiness of Solomon's reign must not be exaggerated. The historical description of it (1 Kings 4 : 20-25) strictly refers only to the kingdom of Israel. In the enormous territory recently annexed thereto by conquest, much confusion, injustice, and oppression by local governors must inevitably have prevailed. However beneficent the personal influence and character of the distant monarch at Jerusalem might have been, yet he could not efficiently control the proceedings of his numerous subordinate officers; and a wise king must have been aware of this state of things. But even in Palestine itself all was not happiness. We are told of the degradation of the non Jewish inhabitants to a state of slavery by the exaction of forced labor and tribute (2 Chr. 2 : 17, 18; 8 : 7, 8, 9); and furthermore of the heavy burden (1 Kings 12 : 4) imposed even on the Israelites themselves, which contributed to bring about the disruption of the kingdom. Further, we are nowhere told that the cases of oppression mentioned in Ecclesiastes occurred within the dominions of Solomon. There is no reason to suppose that he would abstain from referring, when it suited his purpose, to the condition of

other nations as it was made known to him by his intimate acquaintance with the Tyrians, by his intercourse both with Ethiopia and with the countries whose line of traffic passed through Tadmor, and by his commerce with Egypt and with Ophir. W. T. B.

2. If there be no avenger of the wrongs of the oppressed, no time appointed when God will judge the righteous and the wicked, then those who have got through with the miseries of this life are better off than those who are still enduring them. J. M. M.

3. Non-existence is better than existence, if there is no future. To the wicked existence is a curse—they make it so. It had been better for Judas if he had not been born. It is better not to be brought into being than to live a little while in suffering and anxiety and then cease to live forever. This verse cannot be explained on any other principle. Y.—Very ghastly is the picture which our world presents when we look at it as the scene of injustice and cruelty; and very painful is the view it gives us of our arbitrary and oppressive human nature. Could we only see what God is daily seeing and hear what God is daily hearing, we would be apt to join with Solomon, and without the hope of future adjudication we should certainly join with him in praising the dead who are already dead, and who are past our pain or danger. In the music of the spheres its Maker may have given to our world its proper note; but it is a minor tune which is ever sung by its inhabitants, by neighbor nations, and by the several classes of society, evermore to one another crying, “Woe, woe, woe.” *Hamilton.*

4. **Skilful work.** *Successful work* managed skilfully and accompanied with good fortune, so as to ensure the best results. For this a man is envied of his neighbor. And this envy detracts very seriously from the enjoyment of good fortune and success. It brought Solomon to the conclusion: This, too, makes wealth a vanity and a vexation of spirit. H. C. —“Who can stand before envy?” The wealth, honor, success, and especially the virtue of others, awaken envy and hate in the heart of the wicked man. Y.

5. *To fold the hands* is to assume the position of one unemployed and idle. *And consumeth his own flesh.* In other words, through idleness he lacks the means of healthful nutriment, and his body pines away under its deprivations.

6. In other words, it is better to be contented with what can be obtained in a quiet way, than to toil incessantly in order to get both hands

full, *i.e.*, an overflowing abundance. Coheleth would choose, for himself, neither the extreme of the bustling, covetous man, nor yet that of the idle man, whose inaction must bring him to want. Strive for a sufficiency and be content with that; for this can be procured consistently with quiet. Therefore neither overdo nor be idle. Both are vain and fruitless in their issue. M. S.—Very many rich men wear out life prematurely and deny themselves almost all the common enjoyments of life through having both hands full, with travail and vexation of spirit. Alas! what a comment on the miseries of wealth and on the folly of its too eager pursuit. This passage is remarkably in harmony with the scope of the entire book. Throughout the author commends the moderate amount of earthly good which man needs and can really enjoy, but does not commend the abundance and superfluity which goes far beyond the supply of all legitimate wants. H. C.

7, 8. Solomon sketches another picture, in contrast with that of the idle and thriftless man; it is that of the busy miser; and viewing human nature and the world under this aspect, again discovers its vanity as a source of real happiness. J. M. M.—This is the case of a miserly recluse, solitary in the world, with no son and no brother, and, of course, no wife or daughter; who yet toils excessively, and has not the wisdom and the good sense to ask himself, *For whom* am I wearing out my life and denying myself life's real good? H. C.

He never thinks he has enough. *His eye is not satisfied with riches.* He has enough for his living decently in the world, but he has not enough for his eyes; though he can but see it, can but count his money, and not find in his heart to use it, yet he is not easy because he has not more to regale his eyes with. He denies himself the comfort of what he has. He *bereaves his soul of good.* Many are so set upon the world that, in pursuit of it, they *bereave their souls of good* here and forever, bereave themselves not only of the favor of God and eternal life, but of the pleasures of this world too, and this present life. H.

The love of money, like all other passions, grows by what it feeds on. Indulgence serves only to strengthen it, and to render it the more insatiable. What seemed a fortune before it was attained dwindles into comparative poverty when it has been actually acquired. It is measured every year by a new standard—the standard of a more ambitious style of living—of new wants and more expensive tastes. That which at an earlier stage of his career would

have been accounted extravagance has now almost the aspect of meanness. The point at which he is prepared to say that it is enough is like the horizon, to which the traveller, however far and however fast he journeys, never gets any nearer. The case now described is, to the full, as common in our day as it could have been in the time of Solomon. *Buchanan.*

Great accumulations do but stimulate the appetite for more, and the close of life, instead of being devoted to quiet preparation for death and eternity, is frequently harassed by the vexing cares of acquisition. This is misery indeed. Take away the blessed sun, and everything becomes wintry, frozen, all but dead; take away more blessed love, and the heart is dumb, cheerless, insulated, meanly poor, so that the Latins named such a one *miser*. Such old age is hopeless and wretched. So Solomon concludes: "This also is vanity; yea, it is a sore travail." J. W. A.

9-12. The proverbs in these verses are illustrated by a saying quoted from the Talmud, "A man without companions is like the left hand without the right." W. T. B.—It is not good for man to be alone in the journey of life. Let him always have a next friend at hand if he fall to help him rise—himself meanwhile the next friend of his companion, to minister in like manner to every need. The doctrine of the passage was probably intended to apply to lawful marriage—the union of one man and one woman; perhaps also to business partnerships, and in general to the closer intimacies and friendships of human life, in which the ministries of affection and of aid are mutual and mutually beneficent. H. C.

10-12. These illustrations appear to be drawn from the experience of two travellers (v. 10). If one slip or stumble on a steep or rocky path, the other is at hand to raise him; or (v. 11), sleeping on a cold and stormy night under the same coverlet, two friends kept each other warm; or (v. 12), against one the robber's attack would be successful; but the two friends defend each other and are saved. E. H. P.

There is nothing which gives a greater help to any one who is tempted to flinch from his duty, than to see others doing that very duty cheerfully and heartily. We can help each other very much by being more especially careful to avoid joining in what is wrong. How many have been led into lying or bad language, into unseemly jesting, into sinful disobedience, simply because they found others willing to join them or show them the way! How often has it happened that two coming together have

done what neither would have done alone ! How often have two mean souls given each other strength in sinning ! And if it is easy to combine for evil, clearly it becomes an imperative duty to combine for good. *Bishop Temple.*

13-16. The remaining verses in this chapter give the mutations of earthly life as seen in the case of kings. Here also we may see that wisdom is better far than folly ; wisdom in the sense of sagacity ; folly as manifesting itself in egregious self-conceit and stolid ignorance. Better is a child, poor but wise, than a king, old (and rich withal) but foolish, who knows not to be any more enlightened, *i.e.*, who is past being taught—past learning anything—being too wise in his own conceit to be ever really any wiser. H. C.

Solomon must have had a prophetic glimpse of the future by his own inspiration or that of the seer Ahijah. The “old and foolish king” is himself. He who “comes out of prison” to glory, like a second Joseph, is Jeroboam. If the prophecy came through himself, he is rapt unto the future. He looks back from the quiet land upon this crowded, passionate life. He sees the throngs of living men moving restlessly to and fro. But in that day they walk not with David’s heir, but with the “second young man,” *i.e.*, Jeroboam ; and in the following verse there is an allusion to the meaning of the name Jeroboam (*i.e.*, “whose people are many”). But “the people that come after” shall not rejoice in him. *Bishop Alexander.*

CHAPTER V.

1 KEEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God ; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools : for
2 they know not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God ; for God is in heaven, and thou upon
3 earth : therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh with a multitude of business ; and a fool’s voice with a multitude of
4 words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it ; for he hath no pleasure in fools : pay that which thou
5 vowest. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not
6 pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin ; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error : wherefore should
7 God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands ? For in the multitude of dreams there are vanities and in many words : but fear thou God.
8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter : for one higher than the high regardeth ; and there be higher than they.
9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all : the king *himself* is served by the field.
10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver ; nor he that loveth abundance
11 with increase : this also is vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat

them : and what advantage is there to the owner thereof, saving the beholding of *them*
12 with his eyes ? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much : but the fulness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.
13 There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept by the
14 owner thereof to his hurt : and those riches perish by evil adventure ; and if he hath begotten a son, there is nothing in his hand.
15 As he came forth of his mother’s womb, naked shall he go again as he came, and shall take nothing for his labour, which he
16 may carry away in his hand. And this also is a grievous evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go : and what profit hath
17 he that he laboreth for the wind ? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he is sore vexed and hath sickness and wrath.
18 Behold, that which I have seen to be good and to be comely is for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy good in all his labour, wherein he laboreth under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him :
19 for this is his portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his
20 labour ; this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life ; because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart.

Chap. 5. AT the beginning of this chapter a difference of style marks a transition to a new branch of the main subject. The Preacher now begins to address his hearer in the second person. The soliloquy, hitherto unbroken, is henceforth interrupted by personal addresses, which are repeated with increasing frequency from this place to the end of the book. Knobel, who divides the whole book into two parts, the first theoretical, the second practical, begins his second division here. The writer, he says, is gradually quitting the position of a philosophical inquirer, and begins to lay down the principles and maxims which he has deduced from his view of life. W. T. B.

The discourse becomes *preceptive* and *monitory*, which thus far it has not been. The first great question for a man who reverences God is, "How shall I demean myself toward Him, when His providence has placed me in the midst of such trials and disappointments, from which there is no escape? Shall I shun His presence and cease to worship Him, since I despair of any solid good in the present life? If not, how can I worship Him acceptably?" Here Coheleth feels it needful to give his advice in the way of precepts and precautions. M. S.

I. It is of the house of God, which in its full significance means a dwelling made by man for God, by God's command, the building which He calls His dwelling-place, within which He hath inscribed His name, and so consecrated as man's house of prayer and praise, man's place of devout heed to what God Himself declares through His Word and by His Spirit; it is of this consecrated house that the Spirit speaks directly and solemnly in this text. And the direction, Keep thy foot when thou goest thither, and be ready to hear, plainly refers to and intimates what disposition of mind and heart, what tone of thought and feeling befits the soul in entering and abiding within this house. B.

"Keep thy foot" enjoins that the very approach to the house of God should be with reverence, even as the Lord said to Moses, "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:6). *Draw near* to hear is precisely the sense of the second clause, and exhorts the worshippers to enter the inner court, where the priests were accustomed to read the law, and to listen there to this reading as better than to remain without, feasting in a merely sensual way on the portions of their slain animals which in certain forms of sacrifice were designated for this purpose. These professed

worshippers really acted the part of fools in neglecting to hear the Word of God and in resorting to the temple only for the sake of these low forms of sensual gratification. Solomon says of them, "They are reckless as to the doing of evil." They seem to have no thought or care how much they sin. H. C.

To rest in the sign and ceremony and the outside of the performance, without regarding the sense and meaning of it, that is the *sacrifice of fools*; none but *fools* will think thus to please Him who is a Spirit, and requires the heart. They are *fools*, for they *consider not that they do evil*; they think they are doing God and themselves good service, when really they are putting a great affront upon God and a great cheat upon their own souls by their heartless devotions. H.—God is much displeased with listless minds, irreverent postures, and heedless spirits in His Church. No doubt it may be pleaded that such faults come of want of thought, and not of any evil intent; but want of thought is itself a very grave offence in such a matter as the service of God. Even levity is inexcusable; for, at all events in adult persons, it comes of hardness of heart, ingratitude to Christ, neglect of reflection on sacred themes and objects, engrossment of thought and affection with the things which are seen, and an indifference to the presence and purpose of the Holy Spirit. Let us study reverence. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the holy ones, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about Him." D. F.

The eye that searches and knows us penetrates to the heart, and there only God finds the genuine elements of worship. The lowly sense of personal unworthiness, the wondering contemplation of the Divine love, the eager longing for mercy to pardon and grace to help, the faith that grasps the promises, the hope that is anchored within the veil, the kindness that breathes benediction all round, the love that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things—it is these things, breathing forth from the hearts of a congregation, that give pleasure to God. W. G. B.—He that truly loveth his friend transporteth himself often to the place where he was wont to see his friend; he delighteth in reading his letters, and in handling the gages and monuments that he hath left behind him. How grateful is the sight of anything that presents unto him the memorial of his absent friend! And thus the child of God, to testify his love to Him, transporteth himself often to the place where he may find God, in His sanc-

tuary, among His saints. He delights in His letters (the Scriptures), in those holy pledges (the sacraments) which He hath left behind Him, as tokens of His good-will, until He come again. *Thomas de Trugillo.*

Though the most remarkable progress of the believer may be upon his knees in secret intercourse betwixt God and him, yet public ordinances are the means of these private intercourses; though the secret may be more comfortable and refreshful, yet the public ordinances lay the foundation of that secret comfort and refreshment. Public ordinances are the wells; but, for ordinary, the children of God are not so much refreshed with the water thereof till once they get home to some secret corner with it, and there they get a more hearty, refreshing drink of the water of life than they got at the public well; but still it was from thence it was fetched; and so the foundation of these private and refreshing meals is ordinarily laid in the public ordinances. It is true, some that go to fetch home water from the well may, according to their need, get a hearty drink of water even at the side of the well, before they bring any water home; and so the Lord's people may, and sometimes do, get a very heartsome and refreshing draught of living water, even at the well-side of public ordinances, while they are hearing the Word, or receiving the Sacrament of the Supper. *Erskine.*—In cases of necessity Christ in the sacrament vouchsafes to come home to me, and the court is where the King is. His blessings are with His ordinances wheresoever; but the place to which He has invited me is His house. He that made the great supper in the Gospel called in new guests; but he sent out no meat to them who had been invited, and might have come, and came not. Chamber prayers, single or with your family, chamber sermons, sermons read over there, are blessed assistants and supplements to a believer; but when he is become a part of the congregation he is joint tenant with them, and the devotion of all the congregation, and the blessings upon all the congregation, are his blessings and his devotions. *Donne.*

Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is. A man who is not a church-goer has fallen below a right comprehension of human relations and social reciprocations. Behold the solitary wanderer who has gone away by himself on the holy Sabbath morning! He has missed the Divine idea. He should have said, No; to the centre! to the meeting-place! to the rendezvous!—together,

all together—common prayer, common song, common study; and then radiate as you please, carrying the public personality with the narrow individualism, and enlarging the little unit by the infinite completeness of human nature. To hear another human voice is a hint of fellowship, a hint of consolidation, a hint of heaven. We need the Sabbath day, the memorial sacraments, the Holy Book, the preaching man, the fellow-suppliant, the congregation. J. P.

Church vagrancy is a legitimate outcome of the Sunday lyceum view. Those who seek little beyond entertainment in going to church will go where they can get the most of it, and will always be drawn by a fresh attraction. We have “auditoriums” nowadays, and congregations often appropriately figure as “audiences.” We cannot too seriously remind ourselves that we ought to go to church, first, last, and always, to worship God, and that everything about the place and the service should help us to do that. *New York Examiner.*

Let thy words be few. Do not speak much, and as men in light and free conversation with familiar friends and equals are apt to do. Speak as penetrated by reverential awe of the exalted majesty and power of God. M. S.—**3.** This caution applies to all words addressed to God. A multitude of words, poured out irreverently and without serious thought, is compared to the incoherent and unmeaning fancies of dreams when the mind has been overborne with business and cares. In no such manner and spirit should men approach the great God. Let them rather think of Him as filling the highest heavens and yet as condescending in His great compassion to bend His ear thence to the humble prayer of mortals. Let them, therefore, approach his mercy-seat with profoundest gratitude and reverential awe, blended, indeed, with a filial but never a reckless spirit. H. C.

He is a profane person that performs holy duties slightly and superficially; all our duties ought to be warmed with zeal, winged with affection, and shot up to heaven from the whole bent of the soul. Our whole hearts must go into them; and the strength and vigor of our spirits must diffuse themselves into every part of them. Truly all our Christian sacrifices, both of praise and prayer, must be offered up to God with fire; and that fire which alone can sanctify them must be darted down from heaven; the celestial flame of zeal and love which comes down from heaven, and hath a natural tendency to ascend thither again, and to carry

up our hearts and souls upon its wings with it. *Bishop Hopkins.*

4, 5. The Mosaic Institutes permitted and regulated these solemn vows. (See Num. 30 throughout and Deut. 23 : 21-23.) The latter passage is fully in harmony with these words of Solomon. The spirit of the admonition here is, Do not make a rash vow, and then resort to this plea of inadvertence to excuse or extenuate your guilt or justify non-fulfilment. Rather consider beforehand and act deliberately. Make no solemn vow without a serious purpose to perform it. When made, see that you do perform it faithfully. Why should you provoke the displeasure of Almighty God by your rash words and your guilty irreverence, and so bring down His judgments upon the work of your hands?

6. In this somewhat difficult passage I understand the mouth to be named as the organ of speech in making vows and in irreverent prayers. Let not thy mouth rashly involve thy entire person in guilt and consequent suffering. The "angel" here is doubtless the priest, so called because in a sense the *messenger* of God—the agent acting for God—in the matter of vows especially and of sacrifices and Divine worship generally. H. C.

7. Here the multitude of words refer both to the unmeaning, wordy prayers, and the rash and hasty vows described in the preceding verses. Such prayers and vows are likened to the dreams of the night; they have no meaning, no value; therefore avoid them. Fear God; for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. J. M. M.—Men are in peril when they talk too much, and especially when they speak rashly and thoughtlessly before God. The precept of wisdom in this case is, *Fear thou God.* Let a deep and wholesome reverence toward God possess thy soul and guard thy tongue against rash words before Him. H. C.

8. Solomon, having clearly announced the doctrine of a future judgment (3 : 16, 17 ; 4 : 1), in connection with the oppressions and injustice which are permitted to exist among men, reasserts it here. There is a Higher One in heaven, to whom the highest earthly rulers are accountable. J. M. M.—The last clause of this verse I would translate, "For one who is higher than this high one is observing, and the Most High is over them both;" the meaning of which is that a higher officer is over this oppressive magistrate, taking cognizance of his acts; and the Most High God is over both of them, so that if the superior human ruler fails to bring his subordinate to account, the great God will punish both. H. C.

9. This puts a great honor upon the husbandman's calling, that it is the most necessary of all other to the support of man's life; the *many* have the benefit of it, the *mighty* cannot live without it; it is *for all*. H.

10. Not be satisfied with silver, . . . with increase. The love of money is a passion which money cannot gratify in full. The passion is increased in strength, and made more clamorous by that on which it feeds. As age advances, the restless, insatiable passion exerts a still mightier away. Silver cannot—it never did and never can—satisfy the love of silver. What emphasis truly is there in the words of Solomon, "This is also vanity!" J. M. M.—One evil which attends the possession of riches is an insatiable desire of getting more. It would be no hard matter to assign more instances of such as riches have made covetous than of such as covetousness has made rich. Upon which account a man can never truly enjoy what he actually has through the eager pursuit of what he has not; his heart is still running out, still upon the chase of a new game, and so never thinks of using what it has already acquired. And must it not be one of the greatest miseries for a man to have a perpetual hunger upon him, and to have his appetite grow fiercer and sharper amid the very objects and opportunities of satisfaction? Yet so it is usually with men hugely rich. They have, and they covet; riches flow in upon them, and yet riches are the only things they are still looking after. Their desires are answered, and while they are answered they are enlarged; they grow wider and stronger, and bring such a dropsy upon the soul that the more it takes in, the more it may. *South.*

To greed there may be "increase," but no increase can ever be "abundance;" for could you change all the pebbles on the beach into minted money, or conjure into bank-notes all the leaves of the forest; nay, could you transmute the solid earth into a single lump of gold, and drop it into the gaping mouth of avarice, it would only be a crumb of transient comfort, a cordial drop enabling it to cry a little louder, Give, give. *Hamilton.*—If this be the nature of this vice, the more it gets still to covet the more, then nothing can be more unreasonable than to think to gratify this appetite; because, at this rate, the man can never be contented, because he can never have enough. Nay, so far as it is from that, that every new accession to his fortune sets his desires one degree farther from rest and satisfaction; for a covetous mind having no bounds, it is very probable that

the man's desire will increase much faster than his estate ; and then the richer he is, he is still the poorer, because he is still the less contented with his condition. *Tillotson.*

11. With the increase of wealth in goods, cattle, lands, there comes a demand for an increase of servants and employés to manage them. All these must be fed. Thus the outgoes advance with the incomes. What good, then, has the owner above his servants, except in this, that he can look on these possessions and say, All these are mine ! Each alike has his daily bread ; the owner no more ; and his family, his household and servants no less. Hence the actual enjoyments of life are more nearly equal than is commonly supposed ; the special advantage of the rich man above the poor is less than he is wont to think. These facts have a wholesome bearing upon the class for whom Solomon is specially writing. Luther comments tersely : " Whoso then gathers riches, gathers devourers. Therefore, why plague thyself to increase thy treasure ? However many possessions thou hast, thou canst not do more than fill and clothe thy poor body. If God gives thee riches, use thy share as thou usest thy share of water, and *let the rest flow on* ; and if thou doest it not, thy gathering will still be in vain." H. C.

Translated into its equivalent, money just means food and clothing and a salubrious dwelling. It means instructive books and rational recreation. It means freedom from anxiety and leisure for personal improvement. It means the education of one's children and the power of doing good to others. And to inveigh against it, as if it were intrinsically sinful, is as fanatical as it would be to inveigh against the bread and the raiment, the books and the Bibles, which the money procures. It would be to stultify all those precepts which tell us to provide things honest in the sight of all men ; to do good and to communicate ; to help forward destitute saints after a godly sort ; to make friends of the unrighteous mammon. " Remembering the words of our Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive," the true disciple will value wealth chiefly as he can spend it on objects dear to his dear Lord. To him money is a talent and a trust ; and he will feel it a fine thing to have a fortune, because it enables him to do something notable for some noble end. *Hamilton.*

12. Comparing the man of daily labor with the man of wealth, the former is pretty sure to eat as well and to sleep much better. Such labor almost insures health, and with health

the best pleasures of food and sleep. On the other hand, abundance—an excess above his real wants—is so much to be cared for and kept, often with a degree of anxiety that forbids sleep. In this balancing of the relative enjoyments of the two classes, the laborer has altogether the advantage. This also is wholesome doctrine for the wealthy classes, to whom Solomon specially addresses his book.

13. A sore evil it is that riches, the avails of so much labor, should be hoarded by their owner to his damage ; kept, locked from use, to be only a curse to their possessor. What a man has paid for so dearly, one would think ought to pay him well in return. What, then, if it only pays him in *hurt*—rewards him with calamities and curses ! The true wisdom of life lies in laboring not for one's self, but for others. Riches accumulated and used on this principle are choice and precious blessings, not only to the great number of others blessed thereby, but specially to the almoner of these blessings. How unlike his expanded and overflowing heart is the shrivelled soul of the miserly man who hoards and keeps to his hurt, so that the more he has, he is only the more wretched ! H. C.

It is easy to be ruined by success ; success is very often failure, and failure success. It is surprising how soon children come to take the conferments of their parents as a matter of course. It is surprising how soon we come to take the conferments of God as a matter of course. C. H. P.—Relatively to others a man may have a right to do what he will with his own, but in truth and before God, no man has a right to use anything except for the end for which it was given. No man has a right to destroy his property wantonly or to use it foolishly, though no other man may have a right to prevent him. M. H.

14. Men leave their riches either to their kindred, or to the public ; and moderate portions prosper best in both. A great estate left to an heir is as a lure to all the birds of prey round about to seize on him, if he be not the better established in years and judgment. *Bacon.*—Great wealth often proves disastrous to the children of its possessors. It begets dispositions and habits which unfit them to meet the reverses and rebuffs of life. The expectation of a large inheritance prevents their cultivation of those self-reliant feelings and those habits of application to useful employment which are of greater advantage to a young man than the most extensive patrimony.

15, 16. Should a man retain all his wealth,

and go on adding thereto up to the very hour of his death, he must then leave it all. He can carry nothing away with him when he dies. "In all points as he came, so shall he go." "As his friends," says Henry, "when he came naked into the world helped him with swaddling-clothes, so when he goes out they help him with grave-clothes, and that is all."

J. M. M.—The value of all works may be proved by this very simple test, will they follow us? Accompanying us in this world, will they go with us into the next? That only is of real value to a man which he can carry with him. A touchstone that, which neither gold, nor houses, nor broad acres, nor sounding titles, nor household comforts can stand! *Guthrie*.
—We shall *have* only what we *are*. What we have made of our life will be all that we can carry with us out of this world up to the judgment-seat. The test of success will be what survives our dust. And that which is most precious does survive. And what is it? The results, the harvest, for good or evil, for weal or woe, of these fleeting years. What shall these be? They are your inventory for eternity. They are your portion forever, to rejoice in or regret. *Gillett*.

16. The ever-recurring question rises once again, "What profit?" As in Prov. 11:19; Job 16:3; Isa. 26:18, the "wind" is the emblem of emptiness and nothingness. E. H. P.

17. The general sentiment is that this rich man does not even enjoy his food, but all his life eats in darkness, *i.e.*, in sadness, anxiety; is full of discontent; his infirmities irritate his temper and make him intensely unhappy. Probably the writer alludes to those diseases which naturally result from luxurious living, and which so often help to poison the cup of the rich. Thus closes one of the most vivid and truthful descriptions ever drawn by human pen of the wretchedness and folly of the selfish pursuit of wealth.

18. "To this conclusion," he says, "I have come from my observation of human life. It is both good in itself and comely, in the sense of appropriate, befitting man in all his relations, whether to God or to his fellow-men, that he should eat and drink what is needful and wholesome, and should enjoy the good of his labor as he passes on through life, accepting it all with grateful heart to his great Benefactor and Preserver." The beauty of the passage lies in its recognition of God's hand in both the gift of days to live in, and the gift of food and drink to enjoy while he lives. It is pre-eminently wholesome in its moral bearings to

keep this sense of God's favor in the gift of days and of daily food evermore fresh upon the heart. It begets a humble trust for the future; allays all wasting anxieties for great accumulations; and inspires us to a ready sympathy and benevolence toward our fellows who may have fallen under sore affliction from the hand of the Lord. This is using the world as not abusing it; using it so as to fill it with heavenly influence toward a filial trust and a grateful love of our Divine Father. H. C.

Devotion does not enjoin contempt of the pleasures of human society. It brings amusement under due limitation, without extirpating it. It forbids it as the business, but permits it as the relaxation of life; for there is nothing in the spirit of true religion which is hostile to a cheerful enjoyment of our situation in the world. *Blair*.—It is lawful and right moderately to taste those pleasures which gratify the innocent sensibilities of our nature, and temperately to join in those rational amusements which serve to recruit the mind after great exertion, and to prepare it for future activity. As sleep is necessary to refresh the powers of the body, so relaxation and amusement are useful in restoring the energies of the mind. But there is great risk of running to excess in these things, and sinking into idleness and frivolity, or something worse. The point of a wise care is to guard against the gradual encroachments of a love of amusements which, though not positively wrong, may come to absorb the whole heart and consume the whole time, rendering us insensible to our proper duties, and at length incapable of discharging them. *William Fleming*.

Christianity forbids no necessary occupations, no reasonable indulgences, no innocent relaxations. It allows us to use the world, provided we do not abuse it. It does not spread before us a delicious banquet and then come with a "touch not, taste not, handle not." All it requires is that our liberty degenerate not into licentiousness, our amusements into dissipation, our industry into incessant toil, our carefulness into extreme anxiety and endless solicitude. So far from forbidding us to engage in business, it expressly commands us not to be slothful in it, and to labor with our hands for the things that be needful; it enjoins every one to abide in the calling wherein he was called, and perform all the duties of it. It even stigmatizes those that provide not for their own, telling them that they are worse than infidels. When it requires us to "be temperate in all things," it plainly tells us that we *may* use all things temperately;

when it directs us to "make our moderation known unto all men," this evidently implies that within the bounds of moderation we may enjoy all the reasonable conveniences and comforts of the present life. *Porteus.*

The worldly spirit says, "Time is short; take your fill; live while you can." Christianity says, "Use the world, but do not abuse it. All things are yours. Take them and use them; but never let them interfere with the higher life which you are called to lead." Unworldliness is the spirit of holding all things as not our own, in the perpetual conviction that they will not last. It is not to put life and God's lovely world aside with self-torturing hand. It is to have the world, and not to let the world have you; to be its master and not its slave. To have Christ hidden in the heart, calming all, and making all else seem by comparison poor and small. Worldliness is determined by the *spirit* of a life, not the objects with which the life is conversant. It is not the "flesh," nor the "eye," nor "life" which are forbidden, but it is the "*lust* of the flesh," and the "*lust* of the eye," and the "*pride* of life." Worldliness consists in these three things: devotion to the outward, to the transitory, to the unreal; in opposition to love for the inward, the eternal, the true; and one of these affections is necessarily expelled by the other. If a man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. But let a man once feel the power of the kingdom that is within, and then the love fades of that emotion whose life consists only in the thrill of a nerve, or the vivid sensation of a feeling; he loses his happiness and wins his blessedness. Let a man get but one glimpse of the King in His beauty, and then the forms and shapes of things here are to him but the types of an invisible loveliness; types which he is content should break and fade. *F. W. R.*

Christianity does adopt and welcome and embrace every trait that the intuition of right minds follows with its admiration. It asks no man to be a whit less manly, less cordial in his fellowships, less cheerful in his temper, less companionable and genial in his relations to society, less penetrating in his sagacity, less noble in his manners, or less punctual in his industry. Manliness enters into the composition of piety. All that the unperverted judgment of the world approves, the Gospel invites. The religion of Jesus has realized its own promise—completing not only Judaism, but all good yearnings and beginnings everywhere. It did not come to destroy, but to fulfil. It had its

kindly word at the outset, even for those that, having not the law, did by nature the things contained in the law. And ever since it has spread the benignant arms of its adoption over every worthy purpose and every pure aspiration that will acknowledge its guardianship. Wherever the germs of lofty action unfold themselves, there the fostering hand of its discipline is present to train them. The sublimity of all honorable achievements, the valor of pure-hearted patriots, disinterested sufferings, the patience and fortitude and constancy that come out so grandly in fearful emergencies—they are all as much the Gospel's as they are humanity's. *F. D. H.*

Live happy in the Elysium of a virtuously composed mind, and let intellectual contents exceed the delights wherein mere pleasurists place their paradise. Bear not too slack reins upon pleasure, nor let complexion or contagion betray thee unto the exorbitancy of delight. Make pleasure thy recreation or intermissive relaxation, not thy Diana, life, and profession. Tranquillity is better than jollity, and to appease pain than to invent pleasure. Our hard entrance into the world, our miserable going out of it, our sicknesses, disturbances, and sad rencounters in it, do clamorously tell us we come not into the world to run a race of delight, but to perform the sober acts and serious purposes of man; which to omit were to play away an uniterable life, and to have lived in vain. Forget not the capital end, and frustrate not the opportunity of once living. *Browne.*

19. This verse adds to the thought in v. 18 this consideration, that if God gives to a man both riches and the ability to enjoy them, he should accept both these gifts, and especially the latter—the power to enjoy worldly good—as the very gift of God. It so often happens that where God gives riches He gives not the power to enjoy them, that the bestowment of both blessings upon the same man should awaken special gratitude.

20. He will have small occasion to dwell in mournful reminiscence upon the scenes of the past, however trying and laborious they may have been, for God now meets the desires of the heart, giving him both a competence of earthly good, and the ability to enjoy it. *H. C.*—The man who receives and enjoys his wealth as the gift of God will be a truly happy man. Life to him will not be like the life described in v. 17, one continued scene of darkness, dejection, infirmity, and irritation. *J. M. M.*

Careful observers of the times see only too

many proofs of the power of the worship of wealth to choke out of the lives of professing Christians the wealth of worship. The perils of mammonism are all the more dangerous because of their insidious character. Some vices so reveal their hideous horror that men are instinctively put on guard, but the love of money eats into character like a canker worm into the root of a tree, secretly, slowly, and surely. Watchfulness over the motives that guide and control human activity will always keep clear the supreme purpose of life, doubtfulness about which is apt to produce a moral mist dangerously suggestive of shipwreck. "Show me," says Fichte, "what thou truly lovest, show me what thou seekest and strivest for with thy whole heart, and thou hast already shown me thy life. This love is the root and central part of thy being. What thou lovest is that thou livest." Every one, consciously or unconsciously, has mapped out for himself some ideal of life to the realization of which he gives the strength of mind and body. The man who makes wealth the object of his pursuit, the goal of his unceasing endeavor, says life is money, and exposes himself to the perils of mammonism.

Bad as the aristocracy of the past, with its pomp and pride of social distinction, was, the plutocracy of the present, which threatens to be the aristocracy of the future, is worse. Carlyle had truth and soberness on his side when he denounced the aristocracy of the money-bag as the basest yet known, and when he described mammon as the basest of known gods, even of known devils. Wealth consecrated to noble purposes exalts a nation; wealth which ministers to selfish pleasures and pretentious luxury degrades a people to low levels of thought and action. The millionaires of to-day might with profit learn a lesson from Alexander the Great, who, when asked why he did not gather money and lay it up in a public treasury, replied: "For fear lest, being keeper thereof, I should be infected and corrupted." The keepers of money should live in a mood of salutary fear about the infectious and corrupting qualities of the wealth they possess, ever remembering that while it makes a good servant it makes a bad master, and that the slavery of mammon has power to shrivel manhood into a caricature of what God meant it to be.

Covetousness is one great peril of mammonism. The warning of our Lord ought to ring out loud and often from the pulpits of to-day: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Another peril of

mammonism is its downward look. God meant men to look up to His sky, shining with the splendor of the sun by day and the glory of the stars by night. In the look upward one begins to worship, great thoughts are awakened, aspirations to be and do kindle, and the education of the soul commences in its being drawn out of the selfish interests of life. But he who yields to the spell of mammonism has his thoughts and looks drawn downward. Other perils of mammonism might be mentioned, but one contains in it at least the germ of all other perils. We refer to the atheism engendered by the life of money-making. The man who thinks and says he is the maker of his own money thinks and speaks blatant atheism. He may be a well-known figure in religious circles and one of the pillars in a prominent church, but all the same he is an atheist, inasmuch as he denies God's share in the prosperity of his life. The man of business who would save himself from the soul-destroying atheism of money-making ought to write in large letters over his desk, read and ponder daily, the words, "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." Shut God out of your business life, and you will soon shut Him out of your spiritual life.

The perils of mammonism threaten those who make little money as well as those who make much money. The spirit which leads to over-value and over-love of money is independent of amount. Safety lies in placing one's self in a right moral relation to money. The man who feels himself drifting on to the quicksands of mammonism will find an anchor, sure and steadfast, in cheerful and prompt obedience to the apostolic precept: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." Recognize your stewardship; "honor the Lord with thy substance and with the *first-fruits of all thine increase*;" let the first act of worship on every Sabbath be a setting aside of a portion of the week's proceeds for religious and philanthropic purposes, and you are safe from the perils of mammonism. *D. Sutherland.*

Coheth is no epicure. Specially is he remote from *epicurism*, as it concerns the acknowledgment of a God, and gratitude to Him for His blessings. Most earthly pleasures he finds at last to be altogether empty and vain; but the enjoyment of the fruits of one's industry, he repeatedly declares, is a good, and the only good that promises much, while even this is short-lived and transitory. But whatever there

is in it of satisfaction, this is God's gift, and not procured by ourselves. A deep and reverential feeling toward God must have prompted such a sentiment, in such a connection. Providence is not taxed with injustice, nor is unbelief in it excited, on account of the apparently indistinguishing distribution of good and evil in the world, or because of the untoward events of life. All good comes from God, and demands thankful acknowledgment. Suffering and sorrow, when they come on all alike, are not things which give us any right to complain. M. S.

To show ourselves as we are, making no affectation of reserve or difference from others ; to be found at the marriage-feast ; to accept the invitation of the rich Pharisee Simon, and the scorned publican Zaccheus ; to mix with the crowd of men, using no affected singularity, content to be " creatures not too bright or good for human nature's daily food ;" and yet for a man amid it all to remain a consecrated spirit, his trials and his solitariness known only to his Father—a being set apart, not *of* this world, alone in the heart's deeps with God ; to put the cup of this world's gladness to his lips, and yet be unintoxicated ; to feel its brightness, and yet defy its thrall—this is the difficult, and rare, and glorious life of God in the soul of man. F. W. R.

The Scriptures were not given to solve the problems of social life, or of every-day personal duty, for all time, except by presenting the

great principles of duty, of service to God and man, and offering the highest incentives to its performance. The questions which gather about the subject of amusements in our day are settled in the Scriptures only by inculcating the true spirit of the Christian life, and leaving the practical form of that life to the common Christian judgment. *James H. Fairchild.*

This whole question must be taken out of the domain of abstract casuistry. It is not so much a question of absolute right and wrong as of conscience and charity. The spirit of our life is far more important than the letter of our law. The rule of love is higher than the law of liberty. Christianity antagonizes worldliness, it does not conform to it. The Church should deal with it not so much by the axe of discipline as by the sword of the Spirit. Yet, without a doubt, the very law of love may sometimes require a kind, considerate, thoughtful exercise of the disciplinary power of the Church. But our chief appeal must be to the conscience. Our main reliance must be on the spirit and the life demanded by a whole-hearted surrender and commitment to the Lord Jesus. Those who are constrained by the love of Christ can scarcely allow themselves indulgence in any business or recreation, any work or play, into which and through which and out of which they cannot consistently go, with ever-present and affectionate remembrance of Him " who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify us unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." *General Assembly, 1869.*

CHAPTER VI.

1 THERE is an evil which I have seen under
2 the sun, and it is heavy upon men : a man
to whom God giveth riches. wealth, and
honour, so that he lacketh nothing for his
soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth
him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger
eateth it ; this is vanity, and it is an evil
3 disease. If a man beget an hundred chil-
dren, and live many years, so that the days
of his years be many, but his soul be not
filled with good, and moreover he have no
burial ; I say, that an untimely birth is bet-
4 ter than he : for it cometh in vanity, and
departeth in darkness, and the name thereof
5 is covered with darkness ; moreover it hath

not seen the sun nor known it ; this hath rest
6 rather than the other : yea, though he live a
thousand years twice told, and yet enjoy no
7 good : do not all go to one place ? All the
labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the
8 appetite is not filled. For what advantage
hath the wise more than the fool ? or what
hath the poor man, that knoweth to walk
9 before the living ? Better is the sight of the
eyes than the wandering of the desire : this
also is vanity and a striving after wind.
10 Whatsoever hath been, the name thereof
was given long ago, and it is known what
man is : neither can he contend with him that
11 is mightier than he. Seeing there be many

things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in *his* life, all the days of his vain

life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

AFTER describing in the preceding verses the condition of the happiest of mankind, the Preacher in this chapter (again drawing from his own observation of men) contemplates the more common case of such men when their abundant prosperity is impaired or reduced to vanity by certain deficiencies. The instances which he mentions are those of men to whom God gives wealth, honor, success, children, and long life, yet from them He withholds the capacity of enjoyment, rest, permanence, or contentment (vs. 1-9); no labor or effort of man can procure what God thus withholds (v. 10). What, then, is good for man to do, whose lot in life is so thoroughly subject to vanity? (vs. 11, 12.) W. T. B.

Throughout this sixth chapter the Preacher is speaking of the lover of riches, not simply of the rich man; not against wealth, but against mistaking wealth for the chief good. The man who trusts in riches is placed before us; and, that we may see him at his best, he has the riches in which he trusts. Yet because he does not accept his abundance as the gift of God, and hold the Giver better than His gift, he cannot enjoy it. "All the labor of this man is for his mouth"—that is to say, his wealth, with all that it commands, appeals to sense and appetite; it feeds the lust of the eye, or the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life, and therefore "his soul cannot be satisfied therewith." *That* craves a higher nutriment, a more enduring good. God has put eternity into it, and how can that which is immortal be contented with the lucky haps and comfortable conditions of time? Unless some immortal provision be made for the immortal spirit, it will pine and protest and crave till all power of happily enjoying outward good be lost. *Cox.*

2. It is a blessed thing to be "a man to whom God has not only given riches and wealth," but so large a heart; so beneficent, so brotherly, that his fruition of his fortune is as wide as the thousands who share it, and the reversion as secure as the heaven in which it is treasured. *Hamilton.*

3-5. Long life and a numerous offspring were accounted by the Orientals the richest of blessings. But Solomon says that even this man so blessed, if his desires are not gratified, and if, moreover, he should fail of burial (in their esteem a very great calamity), has a less desirable lot than the "untimely birth," the still-born

who live not to see the light of day. This "untimely birth" is further described in vs. 4, 5. H. C.—It cometh in vanity or nothingness; it really has no existence in this world; it is never numbered in the family or in the census of the people; it receives no name, no mention is made of it, and there is no remembrance of it on earth. He had said before that an untimely birth is better than the man who should live a protracted life on the earth and never be satisfied with good; and he is here assigning the reason for a declaration which might sound strangely in the ears of men; that reason is, that *this hath rest rather than the other.* He spends a long existence in this world, and never finds rest to his soul; but *it* lies still and is quiet; it sleeps and is at rest. J. M. M.—*Rest* is regarded in Oriental life as the chief good.

6. The same comparison is still continued, enlarging the supposition as to the great age, the "many days," which the father of a hundred children should live. Suppose his days double the years of the longest-lived antediluvian, yet if he fails of seeing good in his life, what avails it that he has lived so long? Does not he die at last and go to the same place with the still-born infant? A life however long, yet fruitless of enjoyment, and ending in a death that is common to all the race and even to the untimely birth, what is the good of it?

7, 8. The demand for food is twofold: for sustenance, strength, and life; and the indulgence and gratification of appetite. Comprising both these demands, it may be said truly that much if not strictly *all* of human labor is "for the mouth." But the appetite is not so filled that its cravings do not return. More supplies are soon wanted. And in this respect the wise man and the fool are alike. The poor man, who has great discretion as to his demeanor before living men, is here parallel to the wise man, and the same things are said of him. H. C.

9. Coheleth concedes the evil of *desiring continually*, and says that it is *vanity and fruitless effort*; but still he maintains that there is some good in present enjoyment. M. S.

The sentiment is, it is better to enjoy the sight of present good quietly and gratefully than to let your desires roam abroad for pleasures far to seek and hard to gain. Accept what comes to your hand, and beware that you do not throw a loose rein on your desires for absent good. H. C.—The meaning is, it is better to

make a wise use of what lies before us, and to enjoy quietly and contentedly what we have, than to let our desires be continually running out after fresh objects and shifting from point to point, such restless pursuits being not only vain and unprofitable, but creating abundance of needless trouble and perplexity. *Balguy.*—Solomon's will is that we make use of the present, thank God for it, and not think of anything else—like the dog in *Æsop*, which snapped at the shadow and let the flesh fall. What he intends, then, is that we should use that which God has given before our eyes, that which is now here, and be content therewith, and not follow our own soul, which is never satisfied, as he said before. *Luther.*

10. The sequence of thought leads the writer to dwell on the shortness of man's life, rather than on its subjection to a destiny. The following explanation gives that sequence more clearly. *What he is, long ago his name was called.* The very name of man bore witness to his frailty. This being so, he cannot take his stand in the cause which one "mightier" than himself pleads against him. Death is that mightier one, and will assert his power. So taken, the thought is continuous and harmonious throughout. E. H. P.—I paraphrase it, what man has been and is was long ago (*i.e.*, in Eden) indicated by the name given him there—"Adam," *i.e.*, dust; and it is known (by long and sad experience) that he is only dust—frail and perishing, and therefore entirely unable to contend with Him who is mightier far—*viz.*, the Most High God. H. C.

Though it be madness in man to contend with his Maker, it is man's prerogative that his very weakness is a purchase on Omnipotence. Insane when contending with One that is mightier, he is irresistible when in faith and coincidence of holy affection he fights the battles of the Most High, and when by prayer and uplooking affiance he imports into his own imbecility the might of Jehovah. It is hardly known even yet what man can do when his Maker contends for him and fights through him; what moral triumphs and spiritual trophies may be won by man when, through Christ strengthening, man is rendered superhuman.

11. "Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?" What the better is man of that reputation which only makes him more envied? What the better is he of that wealth which only makes him more obnoxious to plots and dangers? What the better is acquirement, when, after all, man's intellect, man's conscience, man's affections must

remain a vast and unappeasable vacuity? Here it is that the other Royal Preacher comes forward, and, instead of echoing, answers the demand of Solomon. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Jesus is God manifest, and, therefore, Jesus known is satisfaction to the famished intellect. He is God reconciled, and, therefore, Jesus trusted is comfort to the aching conscience. He is God communicated, and, therefore, Jesus loved is a continual feast to the hungry affections. Incarnate, atoning, interceding, Immanuel is the bread of life, the only sustenance and satisfaction of the immortal soul. *Hamilton.*

12. These are questions pressed home by man's fruitless striving to find happiness in the world. "What is the great end of this vain life, which passes away like a shadow; what real good is attainable from it? and who can tell or promise that the future experience of men will be any different from that of those before them?" The author has taken the stand-points successively of the mere man of learning, the gay, frivolous man, the busy man, the monarch, the rich man, the long-lived prosperous man, the sensualist; he has contemplated worldly good by itself, in every conceivable form, and has reached no satisfactory result; the questions still remain unanswered. J. M. M.—All the future from any given point is utterly unknown to man; how, then, can he tell what is good for him in this life, while yet his fleeting days hold out? So entire is this uncertainty, so dark is all the future, why should man vainly labor to carve out his fortune by dint of care and toil, and refuse to cast himself upon God, commit his ways to His guiding providence and trust Him for all? H. C.

Although no man can tell the conqueror how it shall be with the dynasty he has founded; nor the poet how it shall be with the epic he has published; nor the capitalist how it shall be with the fortune he has accumulated; it is easy to tell the philanthropist and the Christian how it shall be, not only with himself, but with the cause he is so eagerly promoting. And without quenching curiosity, it may quiet all anxiety to know that when he himself is gone to be forever with the Lord, Christ's kingdom will be spreading in the world. *Hamilton.*

Who can help feeling the deepest interest in the struggles of such an inquiring, sensitive, and anxious man? But, after all, the tenor of his book is far from inculcating gloom and reckless despair. Cheerfulness and sober enjoyment are

everywhere commended, when he comes to advise and to give precepts. All impiety, light-mindedness, murmuring, and distrust of God's justice or goodness are discarded by him and condemned, even in the midst of all the temptations to indulge such feelings, while one has only glimpses of the world of future happiness. To any one who reads the book intelligently, who looks at the condition, and sees the design of the writer, such a struggle in regard to the most interesting question man can ask, viz., *How can I find true and lasting happiness?* to such an one a picture is presented, to be contemplated with the most lively emotions. It is only when we mistake the tenor and object of the book, and look for and demand that which is not in it, that we meet with insoluble difficulties at every turn. But no one who gets an enlightened view of the whole book can feel that a straight-going exegesis will endanger our faith. Quite the

contrary. We are led to see, step by step, what the mind can struggle with and overcome, where there is an unshaken confidence in God at the bottom of the heart. If one in ages past, before the Sun of Righteousness arose in His full splendor, could thus struggle and thus triumph, shame and reproach to us, who live under the full blaze of Gospel light, if we doubt and grow cold and murmur, when the ways of Providence are mysterious and afflictive to us ! M. S.

He now advances, as will be seen in the succeeding chapters, to higher ground, asserts the doctrine of a future life with far greater distinctness, and in describing wisdom as true religion, helps us to see in the very particulars in which the reproach of vanity had engaged his attention and perplexed his mind, how it is removed by the disclosures and hopes of this Divine religion. J. M. M.

CHAPTER VII.

1 A *good* name is better than precious ointment ; and the day of death than the day of
2 one's birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting : for that is the end of all men ; and the
3 living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter : for by the sadness of
4 the countenance the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning ; but the heart of fools is in the house of
5 mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of
6 fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool : this
7 also is vanity. Surely extortion maketh a wise man foolish ; and a gift destroyeth the
8 understanding. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof : *and* the patient
9 in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry : for anger
10 resteth in the bosom of fools. Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these ? for thou dost not inquire
11 wisely concerning this. Wisdom is as good as an inheritance : yea, more excellent is it
12 for them that see the sun. For wisdom is a defence, even as money is a defence : but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom
13 preserveth the life of him that hath it. Consider the work of God : for who can make

that straight, which he hath made crooked ?
14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider : God hath even made the one side by side with the other, to the end that man should not find out any thing *that shall be* after him.
15 All this have I seen in my days of vanity : there is a righteous man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth *his life* in his evil-doing.
16 Be not righteous over much ; neither make thyself over wise : why shouldest thou destroy thyself ? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish : why shouldest thou die before thy time ? It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this ; yea, also from that withdraw not thine hand : for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.
17 Wisdom is a strength to the wise man more than ten rulers which are in a city.
18 Surely there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. Also take not heed unto all words that are spoken ; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee : for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.
19 All this have I proved in wisdom : I said, I will be wise ; but it was far from me.
20 That which is is far off, and exceeding deep ;

25 who can find it out? I turned about, and my heart *was set* to know and to search out, and to seek wisdom and the reason *of things*, and to know that wickedness is folly, and
26 that foolishness is madness: and I find a thing more bitter than death, *even* the woman whose heart is snares and nets, *and* her hands *as* bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be

27 taken by her. Behold, this have I found, saith the Preacher, *laying* one thing to another, to find out the account: which my soul still seeketh, but I have not found: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.
29 Behold, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

THE style of the writer here changes so as to show, especially in chaps. 7 and 10, a striking resemblance to that of the writer of the Book of Proverbs. Hitherto the principal object has been to state the vanity of the conditions of human life; henceforth the principal object will be to direct man how to conduct himself under those conditions. The last six chapters of Ecclesiastes contain a series of maxims, intermingled with statements of the writer's own experience, and with direct addresses to the reader; the object of all which is to show what man should aim at, and what he should do, in order to be as free as his condition allows from the burden of vanity. The general drift of the writer's counsels throughout these six chapters, and particularly in chap. 7:1-22, points to wisdom united with the fear of God as the "good for man in this life" which was stated at the end of the last chapter as the object of inquiry. It is illustrated by frequent reference to and contrast with that evil which consists of folly allied with wickedness. In pursuing it, good repute, seriousness, calmness, patience, trust in God, and forbearance, are set forth as objects to be aimed at (vs. 1-22). In his own pursuit of wisdom he found his greatest obstacle to be his familiarity with women; and its final result was a humbling conviction of the fallen state of man (vs. 23-29).

1. The likeness between reputation and odor supplies a common metaphor; the contrast is between reputation, as an honorable attainment which only wise men win, and fragrant odor, as a gratification of the senses which all men enjoy. The connection of this verse with the preceding verses is this: the man to whom Solomon addresses himself, who is supposed to want to know what is profitable for man and good in this life, is here told to act in such a way as ordinarily secures a good reputation (*i.e.*, to act like a wise man), and not to aim at the gratification of the senses; and to teach himself this hard lesson, to regard the day of death as preferable to the day of birth. While Solomon preferred the day of death, he might still have regarded birth as a good thing, and as having its place in the creation of God. W. T. B.

The Hebrew, which means strictly a *name*, is pertinently qualified in the received version by the word "good"—"a *good* name," as in Prov. 22:1, "A name (*i.e.*, a good name) is rather to be chosen than great riches." Such a name is more fragrant than the sweet odors of the choicest ointments. This figure was familiar to the people of the East, who made great use of ointments and valued them highly. The comparison is at once pertinent and beautiful. We love to think of a truly good man. The mention of his name and even the very thought of him refresh the soul and strengthen every virtuous purpose and effort. The declaration that the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth seems by its connection here to be made concerning the *good man* especially, the man who both has and deserves to have a good name. As to him it is true; for birth opens to him the era of conflict, trial, temptation, contingency; but death closes the scene with victory—all perils over, all conflicts past, and the great problem of life wrought out with glorious success. These views are surely not too high for the age of Solomon, nor for his personal wisdom; for they appear in the utterances of some of the sages of heathen antiquity. "Judge of my principles and of my life," said one of them, "when you have seen me die." H. C.

He is something more or less than a man who has no regard for the name and influence that shall survive him. A good name is not only more precious than perfume, but it is a legitimate object of acquisition. B. B. E.—A name truly good is the aroma from virtuous character. It is a spontaneous emanation from genuine excellence. It is a reputation for whatsoever things are honest and lovely and of good report. It is such a name as is not only remembered on earth, but written in heaven. And should the Spirit of God so replenish a man with His gifts and graces, as to render his name thus wholesome, better than the day of his birth will be the day of his death; for at death the box is broken and the sweet savor spreads abroad. *Hamilton.*

When death overtakes the truly good man,

it settles the matter in respect to him, that he has not run in vain, neither labored in vain; but at his birth no one could foresee how it would result with him. A birth in a family is considered a joyful event, but the death of a good man may be considered a more joyful one; for then the battle is fought and the victory won, and it is said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant." J. M. M.—Death seems to the eye of sense the saddest and most mysterious of all retrogressions. The wheel is broken at the cistern; the circle of life completes itself, and returns to the non-existence from which it sprang. But the day of death is better than the day of birth, because death is a higher and nobler birth. The grave is an underground avenue to heaven, a triumphal arch through which spiritual heroes return from their fight to their reward, made conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Him that loved them. *Macmillan.*

He who faithfully discharges his duties to God and man, as they arise from time to time, and in the various forms in which they so arise, need give himself no special concern about dying grace. That will come when he needs it. God's promise secures to such a man a happy exit from this world, and an abundant entrance into His own everlasting kingdom. Right living is the direct road to happy dying. *Anon.*

Let us not forget that if honor be for the dead, gratitude can only be for the living. He who has once stood beside the grave, to look back upon the companionship which has been forever closed, feeling how impotent, *there*, are the wild love and the keen sorrow to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart which can only be discharged to the dust. *Ruskin.*

2-4. Sorrow may make the countenance sad, but it makes the heart better. Sympathy with those who are suffering griefs known to be the common lot of mankind serves to soften hearts otherwise hard, and to bind more closely together those whom the selfish collisions of life are wont to sever and keep asunder. Moreover, the grave gives us our best lessons on the value of time, the duties of life, and the momentous issues of eternity. Hence it is that wise men feel at home in the house of mourning even as fools do in the house of mirth. *H. C.*

3. Afflictions come not as messengers of displeasure, but as tokens of love; and in dispensing them God acts not as an offended Judge, but as a forgiving Father. They are intended to

work "the peaceable fruits of righteousness" in those who are "exercised thereby," so that they can say, "He hath done all things well," and "in very faithfulness He hath afflicted us." Their afflictions have a moral effect on others through their example, and a direct moral end in their own experience. By the sadness He gives them, "their heart is made glad." *H. H.*

4. House of mourning, . . . of feasting. These phrases acquire a forcible significance from the Eastern custom of prolonging both festive and mournful celebrations through several days. *W. T. B.*

5, 6. There are few men more dangerous in society than those whose wit and laughter foster giddy mirth and repel all serious thought. Solomon had seen such men, and had marked their influence adverse to true wisdom. *H. C.*—To hear *the rebuke of the wise* is a sign and means of wisdom, but to be fond of *the song of fools* is a sign that the mind is vain, and is the way to make it more so. *The laughter of a fool* may fitly be compared to the burning of *thorns under a pot*, which makes a great noise and a great blaze for a little while, but is gone presently, scatters its ashes, and contributes scarcely anything to the production of a boiling heat, for that requires a constant fire! *The laughter of a fool* is noisy and flashy, and is not an instance of true joy. *H.*—Your merry friend is not so merry as he would have you believe. He is more smiling when met than when overtaken; more full of jest with strangers than at home; loud in company, stupid by himself; in a word, bidding fair for an old age of stupor, gluttony, or drink. You know perfectly well that if youth be left out of the account, the people who run after public amusements are precisely those who cannot enjoy solitude, and who have never learned to endure themselves. *J. W. A.*

S. Better. Inasmuch as something certain is attained; and the wise and patient man contemplates the end throughout an entire course of action, and does not rest upon the beginning. *W. T. B.*—The text expresses the general principle or doctrine that by the condition of our existence here, if things go right, a conclusion is better than a beginning. It is in the condition of our existence in this world that this principle is founded. That condition is that everything is passing on toward something else, in order to and for the sake of that something farther on; so that its chief importance or value is in that something to be attained farther on. Thus, what we are, what we have, or effect, or attain, is still relative to something farther on.

And if that ulterior object be attained, and be worth all this preceding course of things, then "the end is better than the beginning." This is the doctrine of the text; "the end," when it is the accomplishment of the desirable purpose, "is better than the beginning." The fruit is better than the blossom; the reaping is better than the sowing; the enjoyment than the reaping; the second stage of a journey to the happy home is better than the first; the home itself than all; the victory is better than the march and the battle; the reward is better than the course of service; the ending in the highest improvement of means is better than being put at first in possession of them. In all this we see it is conditionally, and not absolutely, that "the end is better than the beginning." *Foster.*

The patient in spirit are here opposed to *the proud in spirit*, for where there is humility, there will be patience; those will be thankful for anything who own they deserve nothing at God's hand; and *the patient* are said to be *better than the proud*, they are more easy to themselves, more acceptable to others, and more likely to see a good issue of their troubles. H. —All through the range of philanthropy, patience is power. The influences which do the world's great work are not the proud and potent spirits, but the patient and the persevering. *Hamilton.*

Patience sees things as they are by seeing things as they shall be; patience puts things together and makes sense of things. It is the Divine glory to see the end from the beginning; it is human wisdom to see the beginning from the end. *Carpenter.*—Patience is the best chemist, for out of coarse earth she can draw pure gold, out of trouble peace, out of sorrow joy, out of persecution profit, out of affliction comfort. She teacheth the bondman in a narrow prison to enjoy all liberty. He hath within those strict limits his galleries, his walks, his orchards; though he be alone he never wants company; though his diet be penury he is content; all his miseries cannot make him sick, because they are digested by patience. He hath so overcome himself that nothing can conquer him. *T. Adams.*

It is commonly not difficult for men to be active, or even bravely so, but when you come to the passive or receiving side of life here they fail. To bear evil and wrong, to forgive, to suffer no resentment under injury, to be gentle when nature burns with a fierce heat, and pride clamors for redress, to restrain envy, to bear defeat with a firm and peaceful mind, not to be vexed or fretted by cares, losses, or petty in-

juries, to abide in contentment and serenity of spirit, when trouble and disappointment come—these are conquests, alas how difficult to most of us! Accordingly, it will be seen that a true Christian man is distinguished from other men, not so much by his beneficent works, as by his patience. He is another kind of man and not of us, is the feeling of all who are not in Christ with him. By this he will be seen and felt to belong to a distinct order of being and character. He is set off by his patience to be a brother and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus. H. B.—That is a very remarkable phrase of John (Rev. 1:9), "the kingdom and patience." The kingly virtues are all intertwined with patience and dependent upon it. The kingdom, the Divine kingdom, is inherited through faith and patience, and the kingly man is the patient man. It is a familiar enough fact that the great successes of the world have been won by hard and patient work, and not by inspired flashes. So in the spiritual realm. Spiritual self-mastery, full command of the deepest self, possession of all the soul's resources of faith and hope and sanctified will—all are born of discipline and struggle working in the atmosphere of patience. They have to be won. *Vincent.*

9. This reason assigned against indulging hasty anger is very striking, viz.: that such anger finds its resting and abiding-place in the bosom of fools. Therefore, as you would be wise and would have the good of your wisdom, guard against sudden outbursts of anger. Under its impulses you will be very sure to do what you will have occasion to regret most bitterly. H. C.—Endeavor to be always patient of the faults and imperfections of others; for thou hast many faults and imperfections of thy own that require a reciprocation of forbearance. If thou art not able to make thyself that which thou wishest to be, how canst thou expect to mould another in conformity to thy will. If thou desirest to be borne with, thou must bear also with others. *Thomas à Kempis.*

10. The wise man will rather accept the drift and tendency of his time, and make the best of it. Below the surface there lies perhaps the suggestion of a previous question, *Were the times really better?* Had not each age its own special evils, its own special gains? Illustrations crowd upon one's memory. E. H. P.

In the days of Solomon, when Jerusalem flourished as the metropolis not only of religion, but of the riches of the world; when religion was established, and the ambulatory tabernacle fixed into a standing temple; when they flowed with plenty and were governed with wisdom,

yet this text gives intimation that plenty passed into surfeit and loathing, and this into discontent and open complaint of the times. To satisfy or silence this malcontented inquiry is the design of the words. Supposing it to carry its own confutation, he confutes the question, not by argument but by reproof; not as a doubtful problem, but as a foolish question. *South*.—His meaning is, that the underlying assumption that the present age has degenerated below the standard of past ages, implies a distorted vision—an overestimate of present evils and an underestimate of present good. He would suggest to us that former ages had their evil as well as their good points, and that to compare the past with the present wisely will require a cool judgment and a clear-sighted eye. The mistake to which he refers here comes very often from the heavy pressure of some present evil. Sometimes the aged make it, because the former was the time of their activities, the present of their repose; and they are prone to feel that things were better done in those times when their hand was prominent than now when they are only lookers-on. Solomon does not give such a judgment of things the credit of wisdom. H. C.

In truth, as we expect a greater acquaintance with affairs and more mature judgment in an old man than in a youth, by reason of his experience, and his having seen and heard and thought more, it is reasonable that in like manner we should hope from our own age (if it knew its own strength, and would essay and apply it) more than from former times, being a more advanced age of the world, and enriched to fulness with numberless experiments and observations. *Bacon* —Each age has its own special nobleness, its own special use; but every age has been better than the age which went before it, for the Spirit of God is leading the ages on. When we look back longingly to any past age, we look not at the reality, but at a sentimental and untrue picture of our own imagination. We are neither to regret the past, nor rest satisfied in the present, but, like Paul, forgetting those things that are behind us, reach onward to those things that are before us. *Kingsley*.

11. An inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Though a man have a great estate, if he have not wisdom to use it for the end for which he has it, he had better have been without it. Wisdom is not only good for the poor, to make them content and easy, but it is good with riches to keep a man from getting hurt by them, and to enable a man to do good. *Wisdom is as good as an inheritance, yea, better too*, it is

more our own, more our honor, will make us greater blessings, will remain longer with us, and turn to a better account. H.

12. Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence. Literally, “in the shadow of wisdom, in the shadow of money,” i.e., he who is defended from adversity by his wisdom is in as good a position as he who is defended by his riches. (For “shadow” in this sense see Psalm 121 : 5.) W. T. B.

The excellency of knowledge. Better, *the profit*, thus keeping up what we may call the catchword of the book. Wisdom, the writer says, does more than give shelter, as money does. It quickens those who have it to a new and higher life. E. H. P.—**Wisdom preserveth the life.** “Causes to live,” “makes alive.” Some understand this to mean that wisdom preserves life in safety, or renders life calm and happy; but a deeper meaning is elicited by comparing (with Professor T. Lewis) these words with those of our Lord, “The words that I speak unto you, they are the spirit, and they are life” (John 6 : 63). W. T. B.

This is *the excellency of knowledge*, Divine knowledge, not only above money, but above *the wisdom of this world*, that it *gives life to them that have it*. *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*, and that is life—it prolongs life. Men’s wealth exposes their lives, but their wisdom protects them. Nay, whereas wealth will not lengthen out the natural life, true wisdom will give spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life; so much *better is it to get wisdom than gold!* H.

Money is a defence. Money has a real value which the wise man cannot misunderstand. Such is the condition of human society that money is to it the key of all enjoyments and of all advantages. Money is a condensed world. He who is the possessor of money holds the means of diverting as well as of instructing himself, and even the power of securing the favor of his fellow-men. This law is in nature, and we are so much the less able to find fault with it, as it has for its authority the word of God. *Monod*.—The accumulation of wealth is simply the accumulation of power, which is valuable in the sight of God only so far as it is turned to noble uses. It is subject to the same law with accumulations of learning, discipline, culture, or skill in the arts. These, like wealth, are forms in which power is generated and stored up. The use and application of all these forms of power should be controlled by one common Christian law. If any one of these forms is used for selfish gratification, the possessor becomes an offender, in proportion to the value

and quantity of the power which he misuses. Whoever accumulates learning, or discipline, or culture for selfish gratification alone, regardless of what he owes to Christ and humanity, has in him all the essential elements of a miser. We talk of misers as if they were found among the commercial classes only. But the term is applicable to all who hoard up God's gifts in selfish carelessness of the duties which those possessions impose. It is the use of power for blessing which alone can bring happiness to him who has it. Especially is this illustrated by wealth. All experience shows that, when wealth is hoarded to an amount beyond the reasonable requirements of the holder or his dependents, it loses its power to confer well-being. It imposes a constantly increasing amount of labor, thought, and anxiety, for which the owner can by no possibility receive a personal return. It is God's law that true enjoyment can never be attained unless we forget ourselves in the use of our power for the benefit of others. This law cannot by any possibility be evaded or transcended, and its penalties become stringent and emphatic just in the proportion that property selfishly hoarded increases in amount. *M. B. Anderson.*

13. The work of God. The same phrase occurs in 3 : 11, and here as there it signifies the scheme of Divine providence, the course of events which God orders and controls, as (in the language of Bishop Butler), "the Monarch of the universe, a dominion unlimited in extent and everlasting in duration, the general system of which must necessarily be quite beyond our comprehension." It comprises both events which are straight, *i.e.*, in accordance with our expectation, and events which are crooked, *i.e.*, which by their seeming inequality baffle our comprehension. *W. T. B.*

Let it be forever settled in our mind that the Great God evermore doeth all things well. Hengstenberg has well said : "Because no one *can* withstand God, no one therefore should *wish* to. We ought to humble ourselves *with joy* beneath the almighty hand of God. For, as the Almighty One, He is the sum and substance of all wisdom, all love, all righteousness. Almighty arbitrariness is inconceivable." Perhaps it were better to say, *insupposable*, *i.e.*, utterly at variance with every just notion of wisdom and of love. *H. C.*—No man knows how the heart of God stands toward him by His hand. His hand of mercy may be toward a man when His heart may be against that man, as you see in the case of Saul and others. And the hand of God may be set against a man when the heart

of God is dearly set upon him, as you may see in Job. *T. Brooks.*

14. Literally, *In the day of good, be in good, i.e.*, use it as it should be used. True wisdom, the teacher urges, is found in a man's enjoying whatever good comes to him. And on the other hand he adds, *In the day of evil, look well, i.e.*, consider why it comes, and what may be gained from it. *E. H. P.*

The "work of God," just alluded to, fills human life with various and even contrasted scenes of prosperity and adversity. Hence adjust thyself to them as they occur. In the day of prosperity rejoice, thankful for the good which the Lord bestows in His loving-kindness. In the day of adversity, give thyself much to thoughtful reflection, if so be thou mayest discover in thy heart or life the occasion of the Lord's chastisements. Moreover, God hath set prosperity so over against adversity, arranging them in such uncertain succession that no man can surely anticipate what is next. Let every man, therefore, be prepared for either. With a filial, obedient trust in God he need not fear, for the worst that can come will only bring him nearer to God and be therefore a blessing ; but in the attitude of rebellion against God and in the selfish struggle after good that is only of this world, man is prepared for neither. The dark uncertainty expressed in the last clause was designed to bear especially upon the pleasure-loving and seeking class who make earthly good their great end of life. In such a world, so governed of God, how surely they must miss the end they seek and at last bewail their failure and their folly ! *H. C.*

The good and prosperous days and times of our life are in God's design given to us as peculiar times of comfort and rejoicing. The evil days, the days and times of our affliction and trouble, are in God's design the proper seasons of recollection and serious consideration. The providence of God hath so contrived it, that our good and evil days, our days of prosperity and adversity, should be intermingled each with the other. This mixture of good and evil days is by the Divine providence so proportioned, that it sufficiently justifies the dealings of God toward the sons of men, and obviates all our discontent and murmurings against Him. *Bishop Bull.*—We ought to take notice of our comforts to keep us from grieving excessively for our crosses ; for our crosses we deserve, but our comforts we have forfeited. If we would keep the balance even, we must look at that which is for us as well as that which is against us, else we are unjust to Providence and unkind

to ourselves. *God hath set the one over against the other, and so should we.* H.

The virtue of prosperity is temperance, the virtue of adversity is fortitude, which is in morals the more heroical virtue. Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction, and the clearer revelation of God's favor. Yet even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath labored more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see in needleworks and embroideries, it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground; judge, therefore, of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye. Certainly virtue is like precious odors, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue. *Bacon.*

He affirms that both adversity and prosperity are "made" and sent by God; that the unhappy and afflicted stand within the circle of His providence no less than the fortunate and successful. He means to teach us that we are blind to foresee and helpless to avert approaching changes; and that, because we are helpless and blind, we must put our trust in the God who "makes this as well as that," who has hidden the future from us, that we may commit our way to Him to whom the future is present. Our prosperity is shattered, or our adversity relieved, our joy sinks toward sadness, or our sadness rises into joy, that, feeling our own inability to command our circumstances and emotions, we may remember and confide in Him who "orders all things as He pleases." To win us to a deeper trust in God is what our disasters and our happy fortunes come for, our tempests and our calms, our perils and our deliverances. They come to set us thinking of Him whom, in the quiet, every-day course of our life, we are too apt to forget. They come to teach us that He is always with us, ordering all things according to the good pleasure of His will; and to constrain us to trust in Him instead of in ourselves, by making us feel how utterly we are in His hands. The surprises which befall us teach us how terribly uncertain our life is, and all that we hold dear in life; they teach us how ignorant we are, how impotent, how utterly in larger,

wiser hands than our own. And if we are men indeed, and have discourse of reason, we learn at last that our only hope of peace lies in faith—in knowing and trusting Him who rules this world and all worlds, who sets all our times upon the score. *Cox.*

The goodness of God leadeth men to repentance—not actually in every case, alas! but in proper tendency and by God's design. Exactly the same tendency, and the same benevolence of design on His part, are in everything dark and afflictive. Or, if we take the whole life, as holding both these elements in it, it is still true that in and by this whole life-discipline God designeth not the destruction of any man. He Himself is "a consuming fire" only to what is evil; He is a purifying and preserving fire to all that is good. The purifying, like the proving, is accomplished by the whole of the life-lot and discipline, not alone by the darker side of it—by what is felt to be tribulation. Brightest things have their function in the same great work. There are even some so constituted as to get more good of joy than of sorrow; who are more humble and more humane in prosperity than in adversity. Still, the adversity is needed, more or less of it, in almost every case, and in some cases much of it is needed to accomplish the holy, blessed object. If we did but think of that object, of its beauty and excellence, how when attained it will thrill our souls with a sacred joy, and bring us fully into the high fellowship of all holy spirits, we should not sigh because we have so "much tribulation," but rather, sometimes, be in fear because we have so little. *Raleigh.*

15-18. Throughout this chapter wisdom is inculcated as the antidote to or as capable of mitigating the great evil, vanity; and in these verses Solomon states how the wise man should regard the "crooked work of God" when it bears upon him. After citing two instances of such work, viz., the reward of long life withheld from the righteous and given to the wicked, he says in effect, "Do not think that thou couldst alter this course of events so as to make it straight, that thou art more righteous or more wise than He is who ordained these events; viewing them in that spirit thou wilt only be lost in amazement at the incomprehensible ways of Providence. To set up thy judgment in opposition to His would imply an excess of wickedness and folly, deserving the punishment of premature death. But rather it is good for thee to grasp these seeming anomalies; if thou ponder them they will tend to impress on thee that fear of God which is a part of wisdom, and will

guide thee safely through all the perplexities of this life." W. T. B.

15. The doctrine of this verse is that moral retribution is not perfect in this life; that length of days, and by implication other forms of good and ill as well, do not befall men precisely according to their moral character. It cannot therefore be claimed that God's moral administration is finished and perfect in the present life.

16. It is not supposable that this can be a caution against too much genuine righteousness or too much true wisdom. The better construction therefore is, Be not vain of your righteousness; do not make it obtrusive and repulsive. In the clause which speaks of wisdom, the form of the Hebrew verb very often means, to make a vain show, a foolish display. Such a course under the circumstances contemplated would precipitate persecution, and the unwise man might become the occasion of his own destruction. H. C.—"*Be not righteous overmuch.* In the acts of righteousness, govern thyself by the rules of prudence, and be not transported, no, not by a zeal for God, into any intemperate heats or any practices unbecoming thy character." There may be over-doing in well-doing. "*Make not thyself overwise;* be not opinionative, nor pretend to give law to and give judgment upon all about thee, nor busy thyself in other men's matters; as if thou knewest everything and couldest do anything." H.

17. Fools have their own ways to perish; why shouldest thou hasten the time of thine own death by thine own folly? Although it be true, as is implied in v. 15, that the wicked man sometimes prolongs life in spite of his wickedness, yet take care not to abuse this fact by overdoing your wickedness, and so precipitate your ruin. H. C.

19. *Wisdom strengthens the wise,* strengthens the spirits, and makes them bold and resolute by keeping them always on sure grounds; it strengthens their interest and gains them friends and reputation; it strengthens them for their services under their sufferings.

20. The best men and they that do most good, yet cannot say that they are perfectly free from sin; even those that are sanctified are not sinless. None that live on this side heaven live without sin; *if we say, We have not sinned, we deceive ourselves.* We sin even in our doing good; there is something defective in our best performances. That which for the substance of it is good and pleasing to God, is not so well done as it should be, and omissions *in* duty are sins as well as omissions *of* duty. It is only just

men upon earth that are subject thus to sin and infirmity; *the spirits of just men*, when they are got clear of the body, are made perfect in holiness. H.—The impression of human incompleteness is made by all the records of human lives which we possess. Go into a library, and take down volume after volume—the biographies and autobiographies of the foremost men, the saints and sages whom we all reverence. Are not the honest autobiographies what one of the noblest of them is called, "Confessions?" Are not the memoirs the stories of flawed excellence, stained purity, limited wisdom? There are no perfect men in them. Or if some enthusiastic admirer has drawn a picture without shadows, we feel that it is without life or likeness; and we look for faults and limitations that we may be sure of brotherhood. A. M.

Men sometimes object to the doctrine of the depravity of mankind. But the strongest teachings of the Bible and of the pulpit are more than confirmed by their own actions—by the conduct of the world itself. Every bolt and bar and lock and key, every receipt and check and note of hand, every law book and court of justice, every chain and dungeon and gallows proclaim that the world is a fallen world, and that our race is a depraved and sinful race. *Anon.*—The question is not whether Christian thoughts about a man's condition are gloomy or not, but whether they are true. The people who complain of our doctrine of human nature, as giving a melancholy view of men, do really take a far more melancholy one. We believe in a fall, and we believe in a possible and actual restoration. Which is the gloomy system—that which paints in undisguised blackness the facts of life, and over against their blackest darkness the radiant light of a great hope shining bright and glorious, or one that paints humanity in a uniform monotone of indistinguishable gray involving the past, the present, and the future—which, believing in no disease, hopes for no cure? A. M.

21, 22. Let the consciousness that thou thyself hast sometimes spoken too severely of others admonish thee to expect the same of other men, and even of servants toward thyself, and let it make thee content not to inquire very carefully into all they may say. H. C.

23. He means to say that he had applied practical wisdom in order to search out and investigate the true nature and essence of *wisdom*; for this seems to be the object now before us. Already has he told what practical wisdom achieves. But now he wishes to go deeper, to inquire into and search out its real nature and

essence. Beyond its *practical* effects, he could not successfully pursue inquiries so as to discover its real nature or essence. The next verse shows how fully he was persuaded of this. M. S.

25. A more close rendering will give the nicer shades of the original, thus: "I turned myself round and round, even my heart did, to know and to search and to seek out wisdom and intelligence, and to know wickedness as folly, and this folly as madness," *i.e.*, to know wickedness in its true character as folly, and this folly to be real madness. H. C.

26. This is truly *Oriental* in its conception. Women, it seems, are the examples most in point of the *folly* in question. The low estimate in which females are held throughout the East, even down to the present day, never associating in the company of men, nor even eating with them, being moreover without education or any true dignity of character, and reckoned as mere menial instruments of man's pleasure, leads, of course, to degradation and depravation of character. Here, then, Coheleth seeks his most striking examples of folly, either in its mental or moral sense. M. S.—He now discovered more than ever of the evil of that great sin which he himself had been guilty of, the *loving of many strange women* (1 Kings 11 : 1); this is that which he here most feelingly laments. He found the remembrance of the sin very grievous. What an agony was he in upon the thought of it; the wickedness, the foolishness, the madness, that he had been guilty of! *I find it more bitter than death.* H.

28. As the Scriptures often speak of women illustrious for their virtues, and Solomon himself praises such (Prov. 12 : 4 ; 18 : 22), he could not mean that a virtuous woman was nowhere to be found. There is in this respect no difference between the two sexes. But Solomon's meaning is that having searched out the reason of all the wickedness that passes in the world (v. 25), he had found that there was nothing more dangerous and wicked than a disorderly woman, such as he describes at v. 26, whose malice and artifice are scarcely to be conceived; nor can they who have suffered themselves to be surprised by her without great difficulty escape her

snares. Solomon, therefore, does not here speak of women in general, but of such as he had been describing. *Ostervald.*

29. But whence this overwhelming and universal extension of folly and profligacy? Is this one of the *arrangements of Providence*, so often spoken of and appealed to by him? This is a question which he meets by strong denial. M. S.—He had found that God created man holy that he might be holy and happy in life, but that by his own perverseness, by sinful indulgences, he had created many sorrows and sufferings for himself. J. M. M.—"Inventions," not in the arts—the handicrafts of life, but in the science of sinning, in devices for the perpetration of iniquity. God made man upright; but man, falling from his primeval purity, had strangely prostituted his powers to sinning, to devising methods of selfish gratification, schemes of fraud, treachery, pollution, the covering up of iniquity; the means of being, in fact, intensely wicked, and yet of retaining the semblance of virtue. Ah, how does it tax the ingenuity of wicked men to sustain an appearance of virtue so unlike the foul reality of their vices! H. C.

How different is our state from that for which God made us? He meant us to be simple, and we are unreal; He meant us to think no evil, and a thousand associations, bad, trifling, or unworthy, attend our every thought. He meant us to be drawn on to the glories without us, and we are drawn back and fascinated by the miseries within us. And hence it is that the whole structure of society is so artificial; no one trusts another, if he can help it; safeguards, checks, and securities are ever sought after. Men give good names to what is evil, they sanctify bad principles and feelings; and, knowing that there is vice and error, selfishness, pride, and ambition in the world, they attempt, not to root out these evils, not to withstand these errors—that they think a dream, the dream of theorists who do not know the world—but to cherish and form alliance with them, to use them to make a science of selfishness, to flatter and indulge error, and to bribe vice with the promise of bearing with it so that it does but keep in the shade. *Newman.*

CHAPTERS VIII., IX., 1-6.

1 WHO is as the wise man ? and who knoweth
the interpretation of a thing ? A man's wis-
dom maketh his face to shine, and the hard-
2 ness of his face is changed. I *counsel thee*,
Keep the king's command, and that in re-
3 gard of the oath of God. Be not hasty to go
out of his presence ; persist not in an evil
thing : for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.
4 Because the king's word *hath* power ; and
who may say unto him, What doest thou ?
5 Whoso keepeth the commandment shall
know no evil thing ; and a wise man's heart
6 discerneth time and judgment : for to every
purpose there is a time and judgment ; be-
cause the misery of man is great upon him :
7 for he knoweth not that which shall be ; for
8 who can tell him how it shall be ? There is
no man that hath power over the spirit to
retain the spirit ; neither hath he power over
the day of death : and there is no discharge
in *that* war : neither shall wickedness deliver
9 him that is given to it. All this have I seen,
and applied my heart unto every work that
is done under the sun : *there is* a time wherein
one man hath power over another to his hurt.
10 And I saw the wicked buried, who had
come and gone away from the holy place,
and they were forgotten in the city where
11 they had so done : this also is vanity. Be-
cause sentence against an evil work is not
executed speedily, therefore the heart of the
sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.
12 Though a sinner do evil an hundred times,
and prolong his *days*, yet surely I know that
it shall be well with them that fear God,
13 which fear before him : but it shall not be
well with the wicked, neither shall he pro-
long *his* days, *which are* as a shadow ; be-
14 cause he feareth not before God. There is a
vanity which is done upon the earth ; that
there be righteous men, unto whom it hap-
peneth according to the work of the wicked ;
again, there be wicked men, to whom it hap-
peneth according to the work of the right-

15 eous : I said that this also is vanity. Then
I commended mirth, because a man hath no
better thing under the sun, than to eat, and
to drink, and to be merry : for that shall
abide with him in his labour *all* the days of
his life which God hath given him under
the sun.

16 When I applied mine heart to know wis-
dom, and to see the business that is done
upon the earth : (for also there is that neither
day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes :)
17 then I beheld all the work of God, that man
cannot find out the work that is done under
the sun : because however much a man
labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it ;
yea moreover, though a wise man think to
know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

9 : 1 For all this I laid to my heart, even to
explore all this ; that the righteous, and the
wise, and their works, are in the hand of
God : whether it be love or hatred, man
2 knoweth it not ; all is before them. All
things come alike to all : there is one event
to the righteous and to the wicked ; to the
good and to the clean and to the unclean ; to
him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrific-
eth not : as is the good, so is the sinner ; *and*
he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

3 This is an evil in all that is done under the
sun, that there is one event unto all : yea
also, the heart of the sons of men is full of
evil, and madness is in their heart while they
4 live, and after that *they go* to the dead. For
to him that is joined with all the living there
is hope : for a living dog is better than a
5 dead lion. For the living know that they
shall die : but the dead know not any thing,
neither have they any more a reward ; for
6 the memory of them is forgotten. As well
their love, as their hatred and their envy, is
now perished : neither have they any more
a portion for ever in any thing that is done
under the sun.

8 : 1. Wisdom is apparent even in a man's
face to whom God has given the power of ex-
pressing intelligence and emotion. It makes his
face glow with the radiance of thought. H. C.

2, 3. *The oath of God* here is the oath of
allegiance to the king. Revealed religion en-
joins obedience to the civil magistrate. Such
obedience it recognizes as a duty of the highest

obligation. Civil government has not its origin
in a mere social compact entered into by men,
but in the will and authority of God. Hence
its authority. Consequently religion is the
grand conservator of public order. But as the
oath in question recognizes the supremacy of
God, it does not, and cannot bind subjects to do
anything contrary to His laws. Solomon is

clearly advocating simply subjection to the magistrate, in the exercise of his lawful authority.

5. These words state the benefits which accrue to the peaceful, obedient citizen. Good rulers are not a terror to the good, but to the evil. The heart of the wise man pays a proper regard to all the duties which grow out of his several relations, and performs them in their season. He has reference not merely to present time, but to future judgment. He remembers his accountability to God, and this makes him a faithful citizen. There will be retribution. The connection, says Dr. Noyes, requires us to understand a time of judgment, which denotes retribution. J. M. M.

6. Sentiment: "There will be a time of judgment, because the evil which man commits is so great that it presses heavily upon him." The scriptural idea of the appropriate time for punishment is that it is the period when *iniquity is full*, or *heavy*. M. S.

8. Death is a prevalent, insuperable evil. Hence the proverbial expression, Strong as death that subdues all, cruel as the grave that spares none. It is in vain to struggle with the pangs of death. No simples in nature, no compositions of art, no power of angels can support the dying body or retain the flitting soul. "There is no man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power over the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war." The body sinks in the conflict, and death feeds on its prostrate prey in the grave. Bates.

There is a war where all must enlist and bear arms. None are exempt from its conscriptions. Save the two lonely cases of Enoch and Elijah, the world has yet seen no instance of a discharge. There is a great fortress and line of siege confronting and commanding every group of our people, a line whose pointed musketry we are, perforce, sooner or later, all of us to face, and into the very mouth of whose death-dealing batteries we are steadily marching. Sabbath by Sabbath, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, with each heaving of the lungs and with each winking of the eyelash, the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the thoughtless and the gloomy, the ignorant and the scholarly, are walking up, in one inevitable procession, with the intermingled tramp of manhood's heavy foot, and the patter of childhood's footfall, into the flaming range of these terrible bastions. "*There is no discharge in this war,*" no flying—no bribing—no pleading—no reasoning—no treating with "the last enemy!" W. R. Williams.

One of the causes of not considering the fact of death is the utter inability to form any defined idea of the manner of existence after death. Another is a general presumption of having long to live. Yet another is that men occupy their whole soul and life with things that preclude the thought of its end. And, to give full force to these causes, there is, in a large proportion of men, a formal, systematic endeavor to keep off the thought of death. But let it be impressed upon us, that to end our life is the mightiest event that awaits us in this world. And it is that which we are living but to come to. It holds out a grand protest against being absorbed and lost in this world. It is the termination of a period confessedly introductory and probationary. Without thinking of it, often and with deep interest, there is no possibility that our scheme and course of life should be directed to the supreme purpose of life. To have been thoughtless of it, then, will ultimately be an immense calamity; it will be to be in a state unprepared for it. Foster.—The usual course is not to think that we shall die. We know it, however, and we every day see it light on some one near us. We know that we must die, but we feel that we are alive. We have the habit of life, but we have not that of death. Life, with its bustle, its various impressions, its joys, its pains, ever fills our whole soul. By dint of forgetting death we cease to believe it, and when it at length arrives its presence astonishes us like the arrival of the least expected as well as least wished for guest. But be this as it may, it must be received. We must not abandon life to death which claims it, but restore life faithfully to God who asks it back. It is necessary to die, and die well. Vinet.

Life is that power by which we act and think and love and intend and hope. And suppose that all our energies have been wasted on things that cannot follow us into the grave, then how can we conceive of any life at all beyond this? When we know that we must die, we feel about for something in us that shall not perish, some thread of continuity to knit our present and future life into one; and if we have never lived for God, never realized the difference between treasures of earth and treasures of heaven, we find nothing that shall assure us of that other life. We start back in horror from a grave so dark and so profound. If these two terrors were all, some at least would not fear to die, would even court death as a repose. But there is yet another terror. Death means judgment. To die is to meet God, to stand before a Judge of infinite power, whose wrath no man can re-

sist ; before a Judge of infinite wisdom, who shall call back acts out of the distant past and lay bare all secret thoughts. *Archbishop Thomson.*

Death did not strike Adam the first sinful man, nor Cain the first hypocrite, but Abel the innocent and righteous. The first soul that met with death overcame death ; the first soul that parted from earth went to heaven. Death argues not displeasure, because he whom God loved best dies first, and the murderer is punished with living. *Bishop H.*—*Dying is one thing and the state of death is another ;* and this state of death is not formidable to the believer. Death for him is nothing more than the transit into another and a better world. The Christian who dies passes from the realm of shadows into the Kingdom of light—from conflict to rest—from God, seen in type and emblem, to God, seen as He is in the splendor of His own essential beauty. In fact, the Christian's death is a birth into the fulness of life. "He that believeth on Me shall never die." *G. Calthrop.*

The empire of death, which has suffered a slow decay, which it has required so many ages to overthrow, which has seemed to recover from its defeats, will at last sink by one powerful stroke, never to rise again. It will not require more than a moment of time to raise all the dead, to lay open every sepulchre, to restore every particle of dust, that is fit to be restored, to its proper body, and for all the bodies of the saints to be prepared for the mansion of eternal glory. How insipid and tame are the histories of all other conquests—of the rise and fall of all other kingdoms and empires—when compared with the grand and wonderful achievements of the "King Immortal," and the fall of death beneath His power, and the giving up of all his prey ; when every victim from earth and sea, though under monuments of marble, nay, rocks of adamant, shall be restored ; when He shall bring forth every particular form to be repossessed by its proper spirit, from which it has been for a season divorced ! Thus will He "swallow up death in victory," and then clothe His redeemed with garments of immortality. *R. Hull.*

9. He has seen rulers insisting on obedience to evil commands ; and this, at last, to their own hurt. It is shown above (v. 5) that obedience to such evil commands is sin, and that it brings evil upon him who executes them. Now he subjoins, that such commands injure those also who give them. *M. S.*

10. "I saw wicked [rulers] buried, who came and went from the holy place, and they were

forgotten in the city where they had so ruled ; this—their being at last overtaken by death and oblivion—shows their lot also to be vanity." The ancient versions apply the whole of this verse to the wicked, which seems the preferable interpretation. *W. T. B.*—Not only did they depart, but *even from the holy city* where they had lived, *they went away, i.e.,* their departure was made from *the city* by their being carried out of it in order to be buried ; as indeed all the dead were. *And then they were forgotten in the city ;* in other words, no monument was erected to them, no lamentation made over them, and therefore they were forgotten. *M. S.*—The clear vision of faith sees them passing forever more away from the society and communion of the holy, to be quickly forgotten. It is noticeable that our Lord in like manner (Luke 16 : 19-24) represents the rich man's burial as a notable event, yet his soul went away forever from the abodes of the holy. *H. C.*

Two suggestive facts are fairly intimated by this tenth verse, as thus interpreted : First, *That one may go from association with the godly to the burial of the ungodly.* From the very midst of intercourse the most constant, close, prolonged, pleasant, from relations the most tender and intimacies the most endearing with the holy, from a lifetime of such association in all that pertains to the social state, it is possible to pass from life, from all these associations, with mind unrenewed, with heart unchanged, with all these ties forever sundered, to receive all unconsciously the following of kindred and friends to the grave of the ungodly. This impressive fact confronts and contradicts the secret thought and hope of many who are unprepared for death. *Many do* secretly cherish the contrary thought and hope. Surrounded on every side by Christian friends, whose lives are knit with theirs in the tenderest sympathies, counting themselves safe in such companionship, many live on themselves unheeding the personal call of God, unthoughtful of and unprepared for an issue which depends alone upon their own treatment of that call—an issue whose sole condition and determination is found in their own penitence, prayer, obedience, or their own continued impenitence, prayerlessness, and disobedience. Many are living thus, with an issue so momentous impending day by day—living on undisturbed by thought or fear of its eternal consequences—living thus in the face of God's solemn protest and denial in His entire Word. And alas ! how many the actual signs which seem to show that the *holy*, those upon whose association such a baseless confidence and hope rest, that Christian

believers share in and contribute to the perpetuation of such confidence and hope !

A second fact intimated by the verse is that the *proof of actual character*, ensuring a sinner's burial, is *simply no good left behind, no works of a living faith in Christ, no fruits of an active, vital love to Christ*. The wicked referred to in the text, who had lived among the holy, acted with and apparently like them all their lives, were *forgotten* in the city where they had so done. Unlike the righteous, who in their deeds of faith and love are held in everlasting remembrance, they left behind them no memories of Christ-like acting in the life, no fragrance of beneficent deeds *like His, dictated by obedient, grateful love to Him*. In the allegory of the Judgment, it was not that those on the left hand had sinned grossly, that they had left abundant, positive proofs of flagrant transgressions, but that they *had not* wrought works of faith and love, that they had left behind them no actual fruits, no blessed effects of deeds *done for Christ, through love to Christ, the spring of all holy acting*. *Inasmuch as ye did it not to Me*, this is the charge, the terrible charge undenied, which makes sure the burial and the final, irrevocable condemnation of the unbelieving, unloving soul as unholy, wicked.

The Christian's burial ! How full of rejoicing hope are the thoughts it brings, how stripped of all that is truly sorrowful. The Christian's grave ! How holy, how blessed, how inspiring, how radiant with bright memories and brighter prospects ! Gratefully, hopefully standing there our hearts may triumphantly sing :

" 'Tis a blessing to live, but a greater to die,
And the best of the world, is its path to the
sky.—
Be it gloomy or bright, for the life that He
gave,
Let us thank Him—but blessed be God for the
grave !
'Tis the end of our toil, 'tis the crown of our
bliss,
'Tis the portal of happiness—aye, but for this,
How hopeless were sorrow, how narrow were
love,
If they looked not from earth to the rapture
above !
But the portals of death open out on the skies,
And the mortal who enters in ecstasy flies,
An angel of light, to the throne of the King ;
While the echoes of Heaven in harmony ring
With the song of the seraphs, " Oh ! blessed
are they

Who die in the Lord, and from earth come
away—

They rest from their labors—the works of
their love

Have followed, and crown them with glory
above."

But oh ! the sinner's burial ! how unutterably awful ! The Christless shroud, the Christless sleep, the Christless grave or tomb ! How heartbreakingly sad, how vividly terrible the thoughts which follow the spirit gone to the judgment and the doom ! B.

11. Because sentence is not executed speedily, therefore the heart is set to do evil. The delay in God's retributive judgments for sin emboldens sinners ; they madly say, " Where is the promise of His coming ?" and set their heart fully to the doing of evil. The very mercy that spares the sinner to give him space for repentance, he abuses and perverts to bolder sin, to deeper guilt, and to a swift and more terrible doom. Scarcely any words in this book evince a more just appreciation of the spirit of wicked men than these. The author had noted closely but truthfully how wicked men abuse God's mercy and provoke His wrath. H. C.

A sentence is passed and stands in force against every evil work ; and the words of Solomon represent to us, *on the one hand*, the marvellous patience of God in suspending the execution of this righteous sentence ; and, *on the other hand*, men's vile abuse of his unmerited goodness. Instead of being led to repentance, they grow bolder in sin ; and " *because sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed, therefore their heart is fully set in them to do evil.*" There is an awful emphasis in the last of these expressions ; it denotes the extreme wickedness that sinners may arrive at : not only to commit sin when assaulted with violent temptations, but to make an habitual trade of it ; nay, to employ themselves in it with delight. *Their heart is so fully set in them to do evil*, that all their faculties bend that way. Thus we read of some " who drink iniquity like water ;" " who devise mischief upon their beds," and set themselves in a way that is not good ; nay, who put themselves to incredible pains and hard labor, who " weary themselves to commit iniquity." R. Walker.

Man must strike soon, if he would strike at all ; for opportunities pass away from him, and his victim may escape his vengeance by death. There is no passing of opportunity with God, and it is this which makes His long-suffering a

solemn thing. God can wait. F. W. R.—There is a sublime, silent delay about the Divine Justice which leaves rash sinners under the delusion that against a Lawgiver so long-suffering they may offend with impunity. If every Cain were marked the very instant he shed blood, and every Ananias struck dead upon the utterance of his lie, scoffing at judgments would be impossible. But the awful tread of justice is slow, and so the depraved soul grows bold. Conscience sleeps, and therefore the sinner thinks the sin is not on record. “He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten; He hideth His face; He will never see it” (Psalm 10:11). J. W. A.—Nothing will better that man or move that man who is given up to *spiritual judgments*. Let God smile or frown, stroke or strike, cut or kill, he minds it not, regards it not. Such a man’s preservation is but a reservation unto a greater condemnation. He has guilt in his bosom and vengeance at his back wherever he goes; neither ministry nor misery, neither miracle nor mercy can mollify his heart; and if this soul be not in hell on this side hell, who is? T. Brooks.

To sin because God is long-suffering, is *to be evil because He is good*, and to provoke Him because He spares us; it is to *strive with God* and to contend with His goodness, as if we were resolved to try the utmost length of His patience; and because God is loath to punish, therefore to urge and importune Him to that which is so contrary to His inclination. This abuse of the long-suffering of God is a provocation of the highest nature, because it is to trample upon His dearest attributes, those which He most delights and glories in, His goodness and mercy; for the long-suffering of God is His goodness to the guilty and His mercy to those who deserve to be miserable. This day of God’s patience is the great opportunity of our salvation; and if we let it slip it is never to be recovered. If we misimprove this time of our life, we shall not be permitted to live it over again to improve it better. Archbishop Tillotson.—The long-suffering of God declares His power. What He does not punish now, He can punish by and by; what He does not punish here, He can punish there; what not in this world, in the next. He is patient because He is strong, because all power belongeth unto Him. The long-suffering of God is a declaration of His love, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. This tardiness of vengeance argues no listlessness, no moral indifference to the eternal distinctions between good and evil, on the part of Him who is the Judge of the

whole earth, and by whom actions are weighed. It means that Christ has died for sinners, and that God can afford to wait. Flee *from* Him thou canst not. To flee *to* Him is thy only way of deliverance. Trench.

12. Whatever advantage oppressors may gain, and however great the evils which they occasion, it remains true after all, and it is a consolation for the oppressed, that those who fear God shall sooner or later obtain their reward. In *this* world? The tenor of the Book is plainly against this. That it is in *another* world seems to be the necessary implication. M. S.

It is the happiness of *all that fear God* that in the worst of times *it shall be well with them*; their happiness in God’s favor cannot be prejudiced nor their communion with God interrupted by their troubles; they are in a good case, for they are kept in a good frame under their troubles, and in the end they shall have a blessed deliverance from and an abundant recompense for their troubles. And therefore *surely I know*, I know it by the promise of God and the experience of all the saints, *that* however it goes with others *it shall go well with them*. All is well that ends well. H.

12, 13. Here seems to be a very full and firm conviction of the doctrine of a *retribution*, both for the good and for the evil. M. S.—Disembodied spirits do not at once pass into the state or the place which they are finally to hold. Yet they are in measure receiving the things done in the body, whether good or bad, one class rejoicing, the other suffering. This intermediate existence is in no sense remedial or purgatorial, there being not even a hint to that effect anywhere. Retribution follows death at once. All questions as to locality are vain and fruitless. It is not at all needful to know where either heaven or hell is, for such knowledge would add nothing to our comfort or our inducements to a holy life. Nor do we require to be able to answer every question about Hades or Paradise. It is enough to know, as we do beyond a peradventure, that in the future life it shall be well with the righteous at once and forever; but woe, woe unto the wicked, for it shall be ill with them at once and forever. Chambers.

14. We may mistake God’s thought entirely. The pains which He sends upon the good for discipline we may mistake for retribution and assume to be only tokens of His wrath. The good things He grants to the wicked may be for their moral trial, and in no sense a proof of His approbation. These points, brief compared with the magnitude of the subject, bear upon

the just explanation of those apparent anomalies in the present administration of God's moral government over the race, to which our passage alludes. H. C.

It is worth noting that the instance of vanity, to which these words are specifically applied, is the seeming inequality of God's justice. For if they are considered, as they may fairly be considered, in connection with the profession in v. 12 of personal faith in God's absolute justice, the conclusion is irresistible, that, whatever reason the Preacher had for reserve in declaring his belief, he certainly looked forward to a final judgment in a future state of existence. W. T. B.—The things of this world are not the best things, nor were ever designed to make a portion and happiness for us, for if they had, God would not have allotted so much of this world's wealth to His worst enemies, and so much of its troubles to His best friends; there must, therefore, be another life after this, the joys and griefs of which must be real and substantial, and able to make men truly happy or truly miserable, for this world does neither. H.

15. Mirth is not the best word here. Enjoyment, rejoicing, give the sense of the Hebrew much better. This Hebrew word is used more than any other for "rejoicing before the Lord," and "rejoicing in the Lord," especially in sacred worship and in grateful praise and trust. Solomon commends the free-hearted and cheerful enjoyment of our daily bread and of all the good which God provides for in our physical constitution, for this remains with us as the good of our labor while we live. Yet he carefully suggests that it is God who gives us this life and all its enjoyments. They should therefore be accepted and enjoyed *as His gifts* in the spirit of filial obedience and true gratitude. The same sentiment has appeared before (2 : 24 ; 3 : 12, 13, 22), guarded there, moreover, against abuse by the same beautiful and pertinent suggestion that this is "the gift of God," and that we have even these most common blessings of life from His gracious hand and parental heart. H. C.—*Then I commended joy, a holy security and serenity of mind arising from a confidence in God, and His power, providence, and promise, because a man has no better thing under the sun* (though a good man has much better things *above* the sun) *than to eat and drink*—that is, soberly and thankfully to make use of the things of this life, *and to be cheerful* whatever happens. H.

16, 17. To see the business. The word for "business" is the same which is rendered "travail" in 2 : 26 ; 3 : 10, having obviously here the same sense as there, viz.,

selfish, pleasure-seeking toil for earthly good—thought of, moreover, as altogether unavailing, futile, and vain. In the light of God's providence, often baffling and frustrating the best human calculations and endeavors, he found himself unable to fathom these depths. H. C.

In other words, this matter of the righteous and the wicked, as having their respective lots reversed, and the insufficiency of an attempt to enjoy the fruits of labor—all this is a matter too deep for us to fathom. God has kept the grounds of this mysterious dispensation to Himself. "Who can by searching find out God?" M. S.—There is no fuller statement in Ecclesiastes of the incapacity of every man with his finite understanding to comprehend the plans and operations of the Infinite and Eternal God. W. T. B.

9 : 1-6. The ninth chapter should not have been dissevered from the preceding one, with the close of which it is most intimately connected. He had said that God's work is inscrutable, and to him must be attributed the arrangement of all events. He now says, that the righteous and the wise, and all their doings, are at the Divine disposal, and subjected to the will of God (v. 1). He goes on to develop more fully the objection raised in 8 : 14 against the declarations preceding that passage, respecting an adequate retribution to the righteous and the wicked. It is now suggested again that all have one common lot, whatever their character may be. All men have more or less of folly, and all die alike (vs. 2, 3), and when dead all enjoyment ceases, and they know not anything more (vs. 4, 5). All sensation ceases, and they have no more a part to act in life (v. 6). M. S.

1. This testimony respecting the righteous is peculiarly grateful in such a connection as this. It is refreshing to see that the author in the depth of his perplexities in reference to both God's providential and moral government over men, when facing events and complications which tasked his mind to the utmost, could yet fall back upon this precious truth—that the righteous, the wise, and their works, are all in the hand of God, the object of His unceasing love and care. H. C.—Love and hatred are here understood by almost all interpreters to mean the ordinary outward tokens of God's favor or displeasure, *i.e.*, prosperity and adversity. "Man knows not whether to expect prosperity or adversity from God; all his earthly future is in obscurity." He represents man as looking forward into the future and contemplating various contingencies without knowing which of them shall be his lot. W. T. B.—

He lays this down for a rule, That the love and hatred of God are not to be measured and judged of by men's outward condition. If prosperity were a certain sign of God's love, and affliction of His hatred, then it might justly be an offence to us to see the wicked and godly fare alike. But the matter is not so ; *No man knows either love, or hatred, by all that is before them in this world.* H.

2. No man knows either love or hatred by outward mercy or misery ; for *all things come alike to all.* The sun of prosperity shines as well upon the brambles of the wilderness as upon the fruit-trees of the orchard ; the snow and hail of adversity light upon the best garden as well as upon the wildest waste. Health, wealth, honors, crosses, sicknesses, and losses are cast upon good and bad men indifferently. *T. Brooks.*—The course of nature is without respect of persons ; we see no laws suspended to favor the good or to punish the bad. Yet the inspired writer does not lose sight of the great distinction between the two classes of men, and he recognizes the eternal distinction between moral good and evil, by the terms which he applies to them—the righteous and the wicked, the clean and the unclean, the worshipper and the despiser of God's worship. And “there is a vast difference,” Henry well remarks, “between the original, the design, and the nature of the same event to the one and to the other ; the moral effects and issues of them are likewise vastly different ; the same Providence to the one is a savor of life unto life, to the other of death unto death, though, to outward appearance, it is the same.” J. M. M.

3. Full of evil. How manifestly hideous the process going on in human souls under the power of sin. It is a process of real and fixed deformity. The most beautiful natural character, in man or woman, changes, how certainly, its type, when growing old in worldliness and the neglect of religion. The deforming process murders the angel in us, and saves the drudge or the worm. The man that is left is but a partial being, a worker, a schemer, a creature of passion, thought, will, hunger, remorse, but no Divine principle, no kinsman of Christ, or of God. On the other hand, it will be seen that a thoroughly religious old person holds the proportions of life, and even grows more mellow and attractive as life advances. Indeed, the most beautiful sight on earth is an aged saint of God, growing cheerful in his faith as life advances, becoming mellowed in his love, and more and more visibly pervaded and brightened by the clear light of religion. H. B.

We see no retribution for sin in this life ; who then will believe that there is any to be feared hereafter—if, indeed, there be any hereafter ? This madness, he says, abides in them long as they live. After that—what ? The omission of the verb *go* in the original is peculiarly expressive : “After that—to the dead !” H. C.

In attaching the word *madness* to the moral conduct of unrenewed men, revelation lends us an apt illustration of that conduct. Ever heeding and keenly sensitive to bodily pain or to wounded affection, they have no feeling or thought concerning the more terrible anguish of the spirit, the more fearful wounds to its high immortal affections, to which their own deeds are daily tending and which they are directly inflicting. Sensitive to the loss of perishable wealth, they are insensible to the incomputable loss of the imperishable soul. Every passing event in human life, all the shifting scenes of national, social, and personal history, stir the fountains of emotion in their souls, while the grander events and awful verities of spiritual being, the vaster scenes of eternal history which throng the pathway of the past and present, move hardly a pulse within them. Upon a thoughtful, feeling, God-fearing mind, gazing upon this strange course of immortal men, surely the conviction of human folly and madness cannot but press with saddening, irresistible force. B.

If men were persuaded that sin is attended with eternal death, would “they drink in iniquity like water ?” The devils themselves are not able to conquer the fear of judgment to come, they “believe and tremble ;” therefore when it is not active upon the conscience, it is either because men do not believe it, or they fancy that retaining their beloved lusts they may obtain an easy absolution. Astonishing perverseness ! How many will not discern or censure that folly in themselves which they will condemn in others for extreme madness ? If one riotously lavishes away his estate, and, for the short pleasure of a few years, be reduced with the prodigal to extreme poverty, would he not be esteemed to have been beside himself ? Yet this is a very tolerable case, in comparison of exposing the soul to eternal vengeance for the pleasures of sin that are but for a season. *Bates.*—When we look on the madness of life, and are marvelling at the terrible career of dissipation, let there be no contempt felt. It is an immortal spirit marring itself. It is an infinite soul, which nothing short of the Infinite can satisfy, plunging down to ruin and disappointment.

Men of pleasure, whose hearts are as capable of an eternal blessedness as a Christian's, that is the terrible meaning and moral of your dissipation. God in Christ is your only Eden, and out of Christ you can have nothing but the restlessness of Cain; you are blindly pursuing your destiny. F. W. R.

4. "Whoever is still attached to the living, as to him there is hope." The meaning seems to be—He *is* something; has some power of accomplishment, for even a dog, contemptible as he was in the East, could do more and was more an object of hope or of fear, than a dead lion. This is doubtless a proverb. The author meant to say strongly that so far as this world is concerned, there is no power in the dead, and therefore no ground of confidence or trust in them. This he proceeds to show more in detail. H. C.

The lesson of the Preacher is an old one. While there is life there is hope, and only while there is life. Let us be up and doing, for the night cometh in which no man can work. Our actual opportunities, small and trifling though they may seem, are, simply because they are still in our power, infinitely more valuable than even the greatest and noblest when once these have slipped from our grasp forever. Consider the truth that in all things admitting of the distinction, things that can be said to be living and to be dead, it is life which gives the value, it is the earnestness and truth which underlie all real vital power that alone give significance and redeem from worthlessness; and that unless the angel be there to stir the waters, even the pool of Bethesda is but a stagnant pool, powerless and disappointing. It is thus both in nature and also in man, in the outer world which attracts and engages the senses, and in the inner world of soul and spirit. It is the fresh life in both that we value, and justly. T. H. Steel.

5, 6. I give below a paraphrase of these two verses which in my view is sustained by the following considerations: It is in harmony with the course of thought with which the passage is introduced in v. 4 and with which it closes in v. 6. It coincides with the logic of the passage itself, especially in the last half of v. 5. It relieves the passage of its doctrinal difficulties, viz., its supposed denial of a future conscious existence, and its contradiction of the great doctrine of a future retribution—a doctrine which Solomon in this very book affirms with most solemn emphasis. "For the living know as to death that they shall die; but the dead know nothing *as to the living*, nor as to any of the scenes and events of this earthly life, neither

have they any more reward *in the line of fame and honor*, for the memory of them is forgotten. They may have labored hard for an immortal name among the living of earth, but this reward fails them, for no remembrance of them long survives their disappearance from among men. Also their love and their hatred and their envy have long ago perished; all died with them, and are no longer of the least concern to the living, whom their love cannot help nor their hatred harm; neither have they any longer a portion forever in all that is done under the sun. They may have a portion elsewhere—of that there is no occasion now to speak; but they have no portion in the way of active agency or proper reward in anything done on the earth." This paraphrase assumes that the author is not speaking at all of the departed dead with reference to their consciousness, their happiness, or their misery in that other world, but only with reference to their relations *to this world* and to its events and interests. According to this construction the passage bears forcibly upon the vanity of laying up immense stores for future enjoyment, whether of wealth or of posthumous remembrance and fame. Thousands in every age toil to accumulate indefinitely more than they could ever use in a century—to whom Solomon would say here: "What will all that wealth avail you *after you are dead*? Other thousands, especially in the ancient Oriental world, exhausted the great labors of a lifetime to build mausoleums and tombs for themselves that should immortalize their names among the living. Was there not occasion enough to say to such men: "The dead know not anything of what transpires among the living;" nor have they any more a reward on earth, however much they may have sought it, for the very remembrance of them is perished, however stubbornly they may have fought against this result and labored to make their earthly name immortal. H. C.

6. The three passions, love, hatred, and envy, are named as strongest and most vehement in their action. Even these are hushed in the calm of the grave. E. H. P.

The surest thing in life is death. We can be absolutely sure of nothing else. There will come an unexpected night, of which "no man knoweth, not even the angels of God," upon which no sunrise will dawn. A thousand ills may be avoided, a thousand perils escaped, but death cannot be. But the most unsure event in life is the *time* of death. The moment may come within the next hour; it may be postponed fifty years. No averages, no tables of

mortality, no study of contingencies, can assure any mortal of one day's life. Death is an enemy; to some, alas, not to all—"the last enemy!" Yet over this dread foe there may be victories; there have been millions who have exultingly triumphed. Such triumph is never attained by our own courage, or resolution, or strength; never by recollection of our own obedience, faithfulness, or good works. It comes only from faith in Christ Jesus. It is this that assures of resurrection—not "of flesh and blood"—but of the "spiritual body." *J. L. Burrows.*

God has never promised dying grace when one's duty is to *live*. Grace for duty, for toil, for love, for honesty, for earnest service in every good cause, for brave struggle, for unselfish ministry, for holy influence; grace for noble and beautiful living, and for loyal devotion to Christ while the heart's pulses are full, and while God wants us still in this world. Then grace for dying when the life's work is done.

J. R. M.—Ask for living grace and glorify Christ thereby, and then you shall have dying grace when dying time comes. Your enemy is going to be destroyed, but not to-day. There is a great host of enemies to be fought to-day, and you may be content to let this one alone for awhile. This enemy will be destroyed, but of the times and the seasons we are in ignorance; our wisdom is to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ as the duty of every day requires. Take your trials as they come! As the enemies march up slay them, rank upon rank. Leave the final shock of arms till the last adversary advances, and meanwhile hold you your place in the conflict. God will in due time help you to overcome your last enemy, but meanwhile see to it that you overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. If you live well you will die well. That same covenant in which the Lord Jesus gave you life contains also the grant of death, for "All things are yours, whether things present or things to come, or life or death, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." *Spurgeon.*

CHAPTER IX., 7-18.

7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and
drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God
8 hath already accepted thy works. Let thy
garments be always white; and let not thy
9 head lack ointment. Live joyfully with the
wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life
of thy vanity, which he hath given thee un-
der the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for
that is thy portion in life, and in thy labour
10 wherein thou labourest under the sun.
Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it*
with thy might; for there is no work, nor
device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the
grave, whither thou goest.
11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that
the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to
the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor
yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet
favour to men of skill; but time and chance
12 happeneth to them all. For man also know-
eth not his time: as the fishes that are taken

in an evil net, and as the birds that are
caught in the snare, even so are the sons of
men snared in an evil time, when it falleth
suddenly upon them.

13 I have also seen wisdom under the sun on
this wise, and it seemed great unto me:
14 there was a little city, and few men within
it; and there came a great king against it,
and besieged it, and built great bulwarks
15 against it: now there was found in it a
poor wise man, and he by his wisdom deliv-
ered the city; yet no man remembered that
16 same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is
better than strength: nevertheless the poor
man's wisdom is despised, and his words
are not heard.

17 The words of the wise *spoken* in quiet are
heard more than the cry of him that ruleth
18 among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons
of war: but one sinner destroyeth much
good.

7-9. Here is a turn in the course of thought. The author would say to his readers: Instead of toiling hopelessly and vainly for huge masses of wealth which you can never enjoy, or for

posthumous fame and glory that you can never know of, and that will surely be sunk under the waves of oblivion, I counsel you to enjoy with quiet satisfaction your daily bread, thankful

that God accepts your work. Let your garments betoken inward purity and true joy; living happily with one wife (not miserably with many), even with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of thy transient life, for this is thy portion of good for thy labor in this earthly life. We have met substantially the same counsel in 2 : 24 ; 3 : 12, 13, 22 ; 5 : 18, 19 and 8 : 15. H. C.

Let there be "*joy and a merry heart within ;*" *a good heart*, so the word is, which distinguishes this from carnal mirth and sensual pleasure, which are the evil of the heart, both a symptom and a cause of much evil there. We must enjoy ourselves, enjoy our friends, enjoy our God, and be careful to keep a good conscience that nothing may disturb us in these enjoyments. We must serve God with gladness in the use of what He gives us, and be liberal in communicating it to others, and not suffer ourselves to be oppressed with inordinate care and grief about the world. H.—Amusement must never become an end in life ; it must always be a means, a help on the way, just as sleep is, just as rest is. An hour's amusement should be to you just what a night's sleeping is, or what a day's resting is ; it should make you stronger, clearer-headed, calmer-souled, braver, more hopeful, more earnest, more enthusiastic, inspiring you for better life. Anything that leaves a taint of impurity upon the life, or starts a thought of impurity in the mind, anything that degrades or debases the soul, is unfit and unworthy amusement for a Christian. Christian amusements must be such as do not harm spiritual life ; they must be means of grace. J. R. M.

Solomon is no ascetic himself ; he does not believe in decrying the moderate pleasures which God provides for us in our daily food and nightly rest ; and he knows that if he were to push the doctrine of the vanity of this world to this extreme, his words would only recoil upon himself and would utterly frustrate his great purpose. Therefore he sees the necessity of discriminating sharply between loving the world supremely and loving its legitimate comforts very moderately ; between grasping it in a spirit that is reckless of God, and accepting certain forms of its pleasure as kindly provided and given of God, to be accepted with gratitude ; between devoting one's utmost powers to unlimited acquisition, and being satisfied with the moderate enjoyments which man's physical constitution provides for, and God's love bestows. He knew that men of the world hold the constitutional enjoyments of life to be admissible and right, and that their good sense persistently repels any

effort to make them think otherwise. He therefore took special pains not to offend and repel them from his doctrine. It was not the moderate enjoyment of one's daily bread, or of the well-ordered family state, that he set forth as vanity and exhorted men to renounce. It was not the legitimate use but the gross abuse of the world that he condemned. The thing he decried and deplored was that in this matter men should be reckless of the ordinations of Divine Providence and of their responsibility to their Great Lawgiver and Judge, and that then, in this spirit, not satisfied with the moderate, legitimate enjoyments of life, they should stride on with all-grasping desire and unmeasured toil to accumulate wealth, honor, and sensual pleasure till they make the whole of life one intense and utter vanity, and bring upon themselves the righteous retributions of their Maker. . . . Let him speak ; his experience may save thousands from the folly of a selfishly pleasure-loving and pleasure seeking life, and from the ruin which such a life so certainly involves. Let him speak, and let the earth hear, for his voice is the testimony of God, warning all pleasure-loving men of the rocks on which myriads have made shipwreck, not for time only, but for eternity. H. C.

As Ewald has long since shown, it is impossible to bring an understanding, studious heart to this book without discovering that its true and ruling intention is to encourage men, perplexed by change and dejected by the disillusionizing processes of experience, to a patient endurance of inevitable disappointments, and a prompt, hearty enjoyment of the remaining and sufficient goods of life. The constant and recurring moral of the book is, that "everything is beautiful in its season," and in its season should be thankfully enjoyed, without too curious an inquest into its probable genesis and duration ; that there is nothing better, that it is the last result of wisdom, for a man to "enjoy all the good of his labor ;" and that this capacity of wise enjoyment is God's best gift to man. The cheerful heart that medicines our pain is, then, the gift of God ; and because it is the gift of God, it is open to us all, however delicate or saturnine our natural temperament may be. And like all other the gifts of God, we come upon it while we are walking in the path of obedience. To "fear God and keep His commandments is the whole duty of man," even as to take the good of God's gifts and his own labors is the best happiness of man ; and only by doing the duty do we reach the happiness. Cox.

10. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. The Scripture does not say, what thy *head* finds to do; that may find a thousand things; nor what thy *heart* finds to do, for that may find ten thousand things; but what *thy hand findeth to do*; that is, look what work God cuts out to thy hand to do; that do with all thy might, for there is no working in the grave. We are to do much good in a little time. Our time is short, our task is great. *T. Brooks.*

Produce! produce! were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee; out with it then. Up, up! whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Thy life, oh mortal! wert thou the pitifullest of all the sons of earth, is no idle dream, but a solemn reality. It is thy own. It is all thou hast to confront eternity with. Work then like a star, unflinching yet unrelaxing. *Carlyle.*—Straightway do what thy hand findeth to do! It may be less or more. It may be in public or private. It may be a thing or a course that will be commented on or passed over in silence by others. No matter! when the light comes it is to be followed. Straightway do it and the enemies of souls—of the Gospel of Christ—are taken at advantage, are discomfited, are driven back, while timorous friends, the discouraged, the weak, the halting, receive as it were a new inspiration. A soul in prompt action necessarily charges other souls with the celestial fire—until they, too, glow and burn with love to Christ. Straightway do, say, give, suffer, at the word of Christ, and in living consecration to Him, and the greatest and most beneficent force that can issue from one human soul to another will go out from you to other souls around. *A. R.*

No man ever shapes his own destiny or the destinies of others, wisely and well, who deals much in *presentlies*. Nature never postpones. When the time arrives for the buds to open, they open—for the leaves to fall, they fall. Look upward. The shining worlds never put off their risings or their settings. The comets even, erratic as they are, keep their appointments; and eclipses are always punctual to the minute. There are no delays in any of the movements of the universe which have been predetermined by the absolute will of the Creator. Procrastination among the stars might involve the destruction of innumerable systems; procrastination in the operations of nature on this earth might result in famine, pestilence, and the blotting out of the human race. Man, however, being a free agent, can postpone the

performance of his duty; and he does so, too, frequently to his own destruction. The drafts drawn by indolence upon the future are pretty sure to be dishonored. Make *now* your banker. Do not say you will economize presently, for presently you may be bankrupt; nor that you will repent and make atonement presently, for presently you may be judged. Bear in mind the important fact, taught alike by the history of nations, rulers, and private individuals, that in at least three cases out of five, *presently* is too late. *Anon.*

What do the Scriptures show us, but that God has a particular care for every man, a personal interest in him, and a sympathy with him and his trials, watching for the uses of his one talent as attentively and kindly, and approving him as heartily, in the right employment of it, as if he had given him ten; and, what is the giving out of the talent itself, but an exhibition of the fact that God has a definite purpose, charge, and work, be it this or that, for every man? *H. B.*—Every man has given him of God much more than he has any idea of, and that he can help on the world's work more than he knows of. What we want is the single eye that will see what our work is, the humility to accept it however lowly, the faith to do it for God, the perseverance to go on till death. *N. Macleod.*

There is to be no curbing of our energies, no surrender of our natural talents. Far from it: use them all; heartily, bravely, lovingly, use them all; only let us beware that we use them, first, in entire dependence upon God; secondly, in entire submission to His will; thirdly, without using, or allowing others to use, any unlawful means; and, once more, remembering always the true end which, in exercising them, should be always in our view. The necessities of life must, indeed, be sought through them, as the very condition of our continuing to employ them; but beyond this we may not go; this end gained, the true end of all talents, health, wealth, intellectual ability, influence, from whatever source derived, comes into view—namely, the glory of God and the good of our fellow-men, not our own abundance and the luxurious enjoyment (as we are apt to speak) of life. *Karslake.*

To do as well as ever you can what happens to be the only thing within your power to do, is the best and surest preparation for higher service. Should things go against you, never give way to debilitating depression, but be hopeful, brave, courageous, careful not to waste in vain and unavailing regret the power you will need for endurance and endeavor. *Binney.*—Every

position, great or small, may be made almost as great or as little as we desire to make it, according as we make the most of it or the least of it. To do the necessary duties of any station, that is easy enough; but to gather up all its outlying opportunities; to be ready to lend a helping hand here, to give a kind word there, and a wise counsel there; "to fill," as we say, "our place in life," instead of leaving it half empty; to be entirely in our work for the time being, this is what makes all the difference between a useful and a useless man. *Stanley.*—True work is to be done by making the best of what we are. It is not by complaining that we have not the right tools, but by using well the tools we have. What we are, and where we are, is God's providential arrangement, God's doing, though it may be man's misdoing; and the manly and the wise way is to look your disadvantages in the face, and see what can be made out of them. F. W. R.

For most of us, our service has to be unnoticed and unknown, and the memory of our work will live perhaps for a year or two in the hearts of some few who loved us, but will fade wholly when they follow us into the silent land. Well, be it so; we shall sleep none the less sweetly though none be talking about us over our heads. All that matters very little. The notoriety of our work is of no consequence. The earnestness and accuracy with which we strike our blow is all important; but it matters nothing how far it echoes. It is not the heaven of heavens to be talked about, nor does a man's life consist in the abundance of newspaper or other paragraphs about him. We shall do our work best, and be saved from much festering anxiety, which corrupts our purest service and fevers our serenest thoughts, if we once fairly make up our minds to working unnoticed and unknown, and determine that whether our post be a conspicuous or an obscure one we shall fill it to the utmost of our power; careless of praise or censure because our judgment is with our God; careless whether we are unknown or well known, because we are known altogether to Him. "Small service is true service while it lasts," and the unnoticed, insignificant servants may do work every whit as good and noble as the most widely known, to whom have been entrusted by Christ tasks that mould the ages. A. M. —In an employment however commonplace, and in a corner however inconspicuous, if you take up the task which your hand finds to do, and throw into it the might which God gives, the result will be genuine, solid, enduring. Let each do his own work in his own way, and

as all good work is God's, you will soon see a more beautiful Church and a better world. *Hamilton.*

A heart warmed with the love of God, sensible of its obligations to redeeming mercy, emptied of self, its enmity or repugnance toward the holy and the pure expelled or overcome, taught to hate not only the presence but "the appearance of evil," "filled with unfeigned love of the brethren," in charity with all men, and with its "affections fixed on those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God"—a heart in this condition is fitted to supply impulse and energy for "whatever the hand findeth to do." It is a central heat, whose glow and fervor animate and inspire the active faculties of the soul, prompting them to aim at the accomplishment, and instrumentally imparting the competency to accomplish, those things which come in the form of Christian obligation. *Binney.*

Christian life is action; not a speculating, not a debating, but a doing. One thing, and only one, in this world has eternity stamped upon it. Feelings pass; resolves and thoughts pass; opinions change. What you have *done* lasts—lasts in you. Through ages, through eternity, what you have done for Christ, that, and only that, you are. "They rest from their labors," saith the Spirit, "and their works do follow them." J. W. R.—Look at the energy *around* us. Life goes swiftly in all regions. Men seem to be burning away faster than ever before, in an atmosphere of pure oxygen. Do we work as hard for God as the world does for itself? Look at the energy *beneath* us; how evil in every form is active; how lies and half-truths propagate themselves quick as the blight on a rose-tree; how profligacy and crime and all the devil's angels are busy on his errands. If *we* are sitting drowsy by our camp-fires, the enemy is on the alert. You can hear the tramp of their legions and the rumble of their artillery through the night, as they march to their posts on the field. Do we work as hard for God as the emissaries of evil do for their master? Look at the energy *above* us. On the throne of the universe is the immortal Power who slumbereth not nor sleepeth. Before the altar of the heavens is the Priest of the world, the Lord of His Church, "who ever liveth to make intercession for us." Round Him stand perfected spirits, the watchmen on the walls of the New Jerusalem, who "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." From His presence come, filling the air with the rustle of their swift wings and the light of their

flame-faces, the ministering spirits who evermore do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His Word. And we, where are we in all this magnificent concurrence of activity, for purposes which ought to be dear to our hearts as they are to the heart of God? Do we work for Him as He and all that are with Him do? Is His will done by us on earth, as it is in heaven? A. M.

We perceive in the world around a connection in which none can work for himself without working for all others; or work for others without at the same time working for himself; since the happy progress of one member is the happy progress of all; a view which cheers the heart and powerfully excites the spirit, by the harmony which we perceive in the midst of the greatest variety. How one's sense of interest rises when he views himself as a member of this great and close connection! How the feeling of dignity and of power rises when one says to himself, as each justly may: "All that was ever great and wise and noble among men—those benefactors of the human race, whose names I find noted in the history of the world, and the larger number whose merits abide without their names—they have all wrought for me; I have come into their harvest, on the earth which they inhabited. I follow their footsteps spreading blessing. I can lay upon myself the sublime task which they had imposed upon themselves, of making our brotherly race always wiser and happier; I can build on where they must cease; I can bring nearer to its completion the magnificent temple which they must leave unfinished." Here one may say, "As they cease, so must I." But it is the sublimest thought of all; if I undertake the great task that I can never finish, I shall yet never cease to act and to live in my work. What we call death shall not break off my undertaking; it shall be finished. *Fichte*.

Let it be our ambition in life to make ourselves unnecessary, to anticipate our departure hence by reduplicating in others such energies of holy purpose and such graces of heavenly tenderness, as by the renewing Spirit of God we may have had wrought within us, so that when our *single* life is done, our *multiplied* life may survive; and then, when the last tear shed for us has been dried, and the last memory of us has been erased by time, the energies that issued from us, at any rate, shall leap along the years, and our unconscious selves go scattering multiplying blessings along the broadening furrows of the generations. C. H. P.

Stay in this world, into which Christ came, in which He stayed, as long as God wills. Pray

not to go, pray to stay, pray to be a faithful son, pray to be kept from the evil, pray not to be kept from the world. *Into* the world go, as Christ went. Stand so close to the world that the buffets and blows of the world shall not hurt you. *Under* the world go, as Christ went, to lift it. *Above* the world go, as Christ went, to draw it up. C. F. Thwing.

After all, there is a weariness that cannot be prevented. It will come on. The work brings it on. The cross brings it on. Sometimes the very walk with God brings it on, for the flesh is weak; and at such moments we hear, soft and sweet, the sound of that immortal requiem: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they *rest* from their labors." Or, as Dr. Preston, a man much given to holy meditation, said when dying: "I change my place, but not my company. While here I have sometimes walked with God, and now I go to rest with Him." *Hamilton*.

Let us, then, not desecrate that wondrous faculty of looking before as well as after, which God has given to us. Let one solemn, blessed thought more and more fill with its substance and its light the else dim and questionable and insufficient future, and walk evermore as seeing him who is invisible, and as hastening unto the coming of the day of the Lord. The harvest is great, the toil is heavy, the sun is drawing to the west, the evening shadows are very long with some of us, the reckoning is at hand, and the Master waits to count your sheaves. There is no time to lose, brother; set about it as you have never done before, and say, "This one thing I do." And so let us not fill our minds with vain hopes which, whether they be fulfilled or not, will not satisfy us; but lift our eyes to and stay our anticipations on those glories beyond, as real as God is real, and as certain as His Word is true. Let these hopes concentrate and define for us the aims of our life; and let the aims, clearly accepted and recognized, be pursued with earnestness, with "diligence," with haste, with the enthusiasm with which they, and they only, are worthy. A. M.

11, 12. Taking still another and a new view of human labor ("I turned and saw"), I observed that even the most assiduous and well-directed efforts of men sometimes fail. The swiftest do not always win the race; the strongest lose the battle; the wisest miss their bread; "time and chance" seem more potent over human destiny than man's own best endeavors. Casualties will happen; no man knows his hour of death; the snare sometimes

falls suddenly on men, as fishes are caught in a net; so that we must admit there is an overruling power higher than human that shapes the destiny of men. H. C.—**Chance.** This word means properly “incident,” that which comes to us from without, one of those external events of God’s ordering, which Solomon describes in chap. 3. W. T. B.

A sovereign providence breaks men’s measures and blasts their hopes, and teaches them that the way of man is not in himself, but subject to the Divine will. We must use means, but not trust to them; if we succeed, we must give God the praise; if we be crossed, we must acquiesce in His will, and take our lot. II. —The future is ever in the hand of God. No man can say with confidence that any one scheme he is pursuing shall be attended with success—any one hope or fear which he entertains be realized. Every period of our life is opening some fresh page, the contents of which no human sagacity can determine; nor is there a single event that may take place under the sun which can be known with certainty until it is actually accomplished. R. Hall.

16. Wisdom is better than strength, and the more that wisdom spreads, the more human strength is saved, and the more is comfort enhanced. Even should there be no invader at the gates, when a beneficent ingenuity is exerted to enhance the pleasures of peace; when discovery chemical or dynamical floods our streets with midnight radiance, and bids clear water spring up in the poorest attic; when it mitigates disease or multiplies the loaves of bread; when by making them nearer neighbors, it forces nations to be better friends, and by diminishing life’s interruptions lengthens our span of probation and our power of usefulness—surely the “poor man,” whose “wisdom” thus enriches the species, deserves to sit among the princes of the people; and while religion should render praise to that Wonderful Counsellor who teacheth man such knowledge, patriotism and philanthropy must enroll the discoverers among the benefactors of mankind. Hamilton.

17. It has been supposed that there is a contradiction between this verse and the preceding. But the inconsistency is not in the writer, but in mankind, who sometimes follow wise advice to their profit, and at other times neglect it. Vs. 16 and 17 are merely comments on the two

facts—the deliverance of the city and its forgetfulness of him who delivered it—stated in v. 15. W. T. B.

How forcible are right words! What is spoken wisely should be spoken calmly, and then it will be heard in quiet, and calmly considered. But passion will lessen the force even of reason, instead of adding any force to it. H.

18. Lord Bacon said: “Knowledge is power,” and during the last hundred years no aphorism has been so often quoted. But six-and-twenty centuries before the days of Lord Verulam, King Solomon had said: “A wise man is strong.” “Wisdom is better than strength.” “*Wisdom is better than weapons of war.*” Hamilton.—It is so in every department of life. The man of tact, the man who sees at once what is to be done and promptly does it, in passing through life escapes perils and masters difficulties which involve men of larger capacities and attainments in ruin. Hence it turns out that to every influential post—in the market, the Church, and the government—the men of tact for the most part, not the men of intellect and genius, occupy the most prominent and remunerative positions. Anon.

One sinner destroyeth much good. The wider signification given by Solomon to the terms wise and unwise is our warrant to apply this expression, in the broadest sense, to the moral and spiritual conduct of men. Beyond all question it is *true*, in reference both to things temporal and spiritual. One unwise man, every one acting unwisely, wrongly, does actual damage to every interest, his own or that of others, temporal or spiritual; inflicts damage upon every interest affected by his acting, damage tending to the destruction of that interest. As every wise, right act produces good, so every unwise, evil act prevents the doing of good, or *destroys* good that is proposed or sought to be done. And manifestly, if every *act* has its effect of good done, or of good prevented or destroyed, every *actor*, by hourly multiplying acts, as he *must* in merely living, either accumulates or prevents and destroys much good. And the evil effect, the good prevented or destroyed, is the same, whether the unwise and hurtful act proceeds from criminal heedlessness or from more criminal purpose and intent. B.

CHAPTER X.

1 DEAD flies cause the ointment of the per-
fumer to send forth an evil odor : so doth a
little folly outweigh wisdom and honour.
2 A wise man's heart is at his right hand ; but
3 a fool's heart at his left. Yea also, when
the fool walketh by the way, his understand-
ing faileth him, and he saith to every one
4 *that* he is a fool. If the spirit of the ruler
rise up against thee, leave not thy place ; for
yielding allayeth great offences [or, *gentle-*
5 *ness leaveth great sins undone*]. There is an
evil which I have seen under the sun, as it
were an error which proceedeth from the
6 ruler : folly is set in great dignity, and the
7 rich sit in low place. I have seen servants
upon horses, and princes walking as servants
8 upon the earth. He that diggeth a pit shall
fall into it ; and whoso breaketh through a
9 fence, a serpent shall bite him. Whoso
heweth out stones shall be hurt therewith ;
and he that cleaveth wood is endangered
10 thereby. If the iron be blunt, and one do
not whet the edge, then must he put to more
strength : but wisdom is profitable to direct.
11 If the serpent bite before it be charmed, then
12 is there no advantage in the charmer. The
words of a wise man's mouth are gracious ;
but the lips of a fool will swallow up him-
13 self. The beginning of the words of his
mouth is foolishness : and the end of his
14 talk is mischievous madness. A fool also
multiplieth words : *yet* man knoweth not
what shall be ; and that which shall be after
15 him, who can tell him ? The labour of
fools wearieth every one of them, for he
16 knoweth not how to go to the city. Woe
to thee, O land, when thy king is a child,
17 and thy princes eat in the morning ! Happy
art thou, O land, when thy king is the son
of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season,
18 for strength, and not for drunkenness ! By
slothfulness the roof sinketh in ; and through
19 idleness of the hands the house leaketh. A
feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh
glad the life : and money answereth all
20 things. Curse not the king, no, not in thy
thought ; and curse not the rich in thy bed-
chamber : for a bird of the air shall carry
the voice, and that which hath wings shall
tell the matter.

THE tenth chapter has been described as apparently the most disconnected part of the whole book. The retrospective character of the former part of the book now ceases ; and this chapter resembles a portion of the Book of Proverbs, consisting entirely of rhythmical sentences giving advice, more or less direct, as to conduct. It is part of the writer's answer to the question proposed in chaps. 2 : 3 ; 6 : 12, "What is good for men to do !" The thought which underlies the whole chapter is the advantage of that wisdom which includes piety and patience, as practical guidance through all the perplexities of life ; various traits of wisdom are set forth in a favorable light, heightened by contrast with folly. Consistency (v. 1) and readiness (vs. 2, 3) are attributes of the wise man, also obedience, and submission to authority, even though its exercise be accompanied by great abuses (vs. 4-7) ; also caution, preparation to meet with obstacles (vs. 8-10) ; conciliatory speech, in contrast to the loquacity and self-confidence of a fool (vs. 11-15) ; temperance, industry, and government of the tongue, specially in speaking of superiors. Throughout a great part of this chapter the advice seems, in addition to its general applica-

tion, to have a special reference to servants of a king. W. T. B.

1. The swarms of flies in the East very soon corrupt and destroy any moist unguent or mixture which is not carefully covered from them, and pollute a dish of food in a few minutes. *Tristram*.

In the opening verse of chap. 7 Solomon had emphatically said that a good name is better than precious ointment. It may have been this very comparison which afterward suggested this striking thought. The very sweetness of a precious ointment—the very exquisiteness and delicacy of its odor—exposes it to be the more easily injured. It may be so tainted by the corruption of even a dead fly, as to have its perfume spoiled. And how true a picture does this illustration exhibit, of the fatal injury which a little folly is sure to inflict upon the good name of the man who is held in reputation for wisdom and honor. *Buchanan*.—A little folly in a wise man, a small sin in an honest man, and a slight indecency of manners in a man of courtly behavior, often greatly derogate from their fame and reputation. *Bacon*.

2. A wise man's heart is at his right hand—that is, ready to be employed with

dexterity and effect. *Parkhurst*.—Herein a truly wise man's worth is discovered that his judgment never fails him in the greatest difficulties; in which he not only resolves right, but takes things by the right handle; whereas a fool mistakes in his aim, and stumbles so much in the easiest business that he commonly miscarries. *Bishop Patrick*.

The words *right hand* and *left* are used figuratively. The meaning is, that the wise man knows how to adapt means to their proper end; and as goodness is involved in the wisdom here referred to, he is ready to do good—his heart directs to the performance of deeds which are graceful and beautiful, morally considered; but the fool does not employ his faculties wisely; and, as this is but another name for sinner, neither does his heart lead him to perform benevolent actions, but rather those which are sinister and corrupt. J. M. M.

3. We need not press the word "say" to its strictest literal sense—that of using these very words; but may take it to mean, He *seems* to say; he shows very plainly—that he is a fool. Then the verse will mean that in the common affairs of life the fool's wisdom fails him and he shows himself to all men to be a fool. H. C.—Everywhere, and at all times, the folly of a fool and the wickedness of a sinner are apparent—by the way as well as in the house. Wickedness, like folly, is conspicuous in him who is given to it. It is displayed on all occasions, in public as well as private; he proclaims himself a sinner, a fool in the most melancholy sense.

4. The dignity and gentleness of the man who fears God will prove the best shield against that wrath of a king, which is said to be as messengers of death, and which only the wise man can pacify (Prov. 16 : 14). J. M. M.

5-7. The idea is that the foolish ruler commits a great mistake and does a great evil by thrusting out of office worthy men and promoting the unworthy. H. C.—6. The sudden elevation of persons in a low condition to office under an Eastern despot, is a transaction that occurs almost every day; and, on the other hand, the degradation of those in office, for the sake of confiscating their property, is equally frequent in the *Eastern* world.—7. This is only another method of illustrating what he had just said. Servants are promoted to office and ride forth in state, for horses are used in the East principally by the rich and nobles. On the other hand, they who once were *princes* take the place of servants.

8-11. In all these verses, the most promi-

nent of all the apothegmatic passages in *Coheleth*, there is not a single instance in which the proverb is quoted for its own sake, but merely because it can be made to illustrate the mischief that a want of wisdom or discretion will occasion. What the writer would show is, that, even in the most common concerns and transactions of life, discretion and foresight are needed, in order to avoid danger and to make undertakings successful. In all he is illustrating the final clause of v. 10. M. S.

8. The proverb is double-edged, and may have a twofold meaning: First, if you injure your neighbor's property and act as an oppressor, there may come an instrument of retribution out of the circumstances of the act itself. Second, if you are too daring a reformer, removing the tottering wall of a decayed and corrupt institution, you may expect that the serpents in the crannies, those who have "vested interests" in the abuse, will bite the hand that disturbs them. You need beforehand to "count the cost" of the work of reformation. E. H. P.

9. The cases made in v. 9 are simply difficult but useful occupations which require skill to prevent personal harm. Wisdom is profitable to direct here, as well as in the case next mentioned. H. C.—If we meet with knotty pieces of timber, men of perverse and ungovernable spirits, and we think to master them by force and violence, and hew them to pieces, they may not only prove too hard for us, but the attempt may turn to our damage. Rather let wisdom direct to gentle methods and forbear violent ones. H.

10. It is, of course, a case of wisdom whether it will pay best to sharpen the dull tool, or to put in the requisite additional strength. The case is adduced simply to illustrate the practical value of wisdom. H. C.—**Wisdom is profitable to direct.** Wisdom will still find out how to make it execute its office. *Hodgson*.—Wisdom does, as it were, whet the edge of the axe, and direct men to do that with ease which otherwise cannot be achieved without much labor. *Bishop H.*

A blunt axe implies heavy blows and an aching arm, coarse work with a blistered hand. But "wisdom is profitable to direct." Intelligence is as good as strength, and a little skill will save both time and materials, money and temper. The day for stone hatchets and blunt axes is past, and from the humblest craft to the most intellectual profession, in order to succeed, it is requisite to be clever and active and well-informed. Those who are trying to benefit others should possess the wisdom which is

profitable to direct. Much good has been defeated by the want of skill or practical wisdom in Christian professors. For all exigencies there is provided a great and precious promise: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." But, like all the gifts of God, this talent grows by trading; and he who prayerfully exerts his understanding in order to maintain the right-forward path of duty, will soon be fit to guide and counsel others. *Hamilton.*

11. When a man had not *wisdom* to use his tongue so as to render harmless the serpent, then no advantage accrued to him from being *the possessor of a tongue*. In other words, even the most distinguished members of the body are comparatively useless, without wisdom to direct their use. This verse, therefore, is of the same tenor as the preceding verses. That the *tongue* was specially employed in *enchantment*, is evident from the fact that this mostly consists of *cantillating* certain forms of exorcism. M. S.

12. The antithesis here lies between the words of wise men and the words of fools in the point of value and of results to themselves. The wise man's words are gracious, *i.e.*, pleasant, agreeable, conciliatory, winning the goodwill of others and fraught with good to himself. On the contrary, the lips of a fool (by means of his foolish words) will frustrate his efforts and sink his cause. H. C.—The *wise man* here is the good man; his words are true, honest, and are therefore kind; even when they convey rebuke they are calculated to do good to those to whom they are addressed. *The fool* is the wicked fool, the babbler, the slanderer; his words are not only injurious to others, but they injure himself; the deception at length becomes too transparent to be tolerated, and his hypocrisy and malignity react upon himself. J. M. M.

13. This gives a reason for what was affirmed in the preceding verse. From beginning to end he plays the fool in all that he says. What he utters is folly, and oftentimes even a *madness* which is *mischievous* to himself. Not until this mischief overtakes him will he cease prating; it will be well if he does then.

14. Although much speaking leads to the utterance of many foolish things, yet the fool indulges in it; and this, even when neither he nor any one else can tell what mischievous consequences will follow. The reasoning stands thus: He must be a fool, who utters things that may have mischievous consequences which none can foretell. M. S.

15. So far from saying, "I will go to such a city, and buy, and sell, and get gain," the fool ought to be humble; for he knoweth not how even to *go to* the city, much less to make himself prosperous there. Y.

18. Slack and sluggish hands neglect repairs and leave the timbers of the house to rot and its roof to leak. H. C.—The roof leaks from inattention and idleness. And the longer it is neglected, the more difficult will it be to repair it. Y.—The only cure for indolence is work; the only cure for selfishness is sacrifice; the only cure for unbelief is to shake off the ague of doubt by doing Christ's bidding; the only cure for timidity is to plunge into some dreaded duty before the chill comes on. *Rutherford.*

19. Money answereth all things. It answers not only our comfort, but also our imperious wants, our sacred obligations. To desire it is a thing as innocent as the act of breathing; but, from a legitimate attachment for it, to an extreme attachment, the passage is short and slippery. A. *Monod.*—Riches *in themselves* are no evil. Nor is the bare *possession* of them wrong. Nor is the *desire to possess* them sinful, provided that desire exist under certain restrictions. For in almost every stage of civilization money is requisite to procure the conveniences, and even the necessities of life; to desire it therefore as the means of life, is as innocent as to live. In its higher application it may be made the instrument of great relative usefulness; to seek it, then, as the means of doing good, is not a vice, but a virtue. But, perceiving that money is so important an agent in society, that it not only fences off the wants and woes of poverty, but that, like a centre of attraction, it can draw to itself every object of worldly desire from the farthest circumference, the temptation arises of desiring it inordinately, of even desiring it for its own sake, of supposing that the instrument of procuring so much good must itself possess intrinsic excellence. *Harris.*

Wealth is the implement or result of industry—an instrument of influence that has in itself no moral character, and can have none apart from the use to which it is applied. It is simply an instrument which the good or evil passions of men can employ to produce any desired result. And as thus apprehended, its power is vast—can scarcely be overrated. It furnishes the capital of enterprise. It is the talent which industry can put out to usury and multiply manifold. In conjunction with human energy, its natural ally, it can accomplish wonders. It carries forward all the processes of our com-

plicated civilization. It rears the manufactory, feeds its spindles, and turns its wheels. It provides and sustains the laboratory of art. It builds the school-house, the college, the church. It covers the land with railroads and canals, developing new wealth along their track. It tunnels the mountain, tames the wilderness, and opens the forest. It launches the vessel it has built, unfurls the sail of commerce, and explores the coasts of distant lands. It turns the world into a great workhouse of industry, rich with the products of every soil and the treasures of every clime. Some few rills of its great river, overflowing its banks, run into the channels of benevolence, and cheer the arid waste of human misery, sprinkling the broad desert with green oases or turning the wheels of hallowed enterprise. *Gillett.*

There are two very simple tests for determining the right use of riches—the one is, that we shall so use them as to extract from them the real and rational enjoyment they are intended to minister to their possessor; the other is, that they shall be so used as to be made the vehicles of blessing to mankind. It unquestionably is legitimate to use wealth in the gratification of refined tastes, and in whatever Christian ways will best fit us for the service of God and for usefulness to mankind. There is no way of enjoying one's possessions like that of using them for the glory of the Giver of them and for the good of our fellow-beings. That it is "more blessed to give than to receive," every one finds to be true who tries the experiment. But there is here an open secret. He who would know the real and abiding blessedness of giving, must begin early, and practise often. We are all creatures of habit. Emotions, like principles of action which they always accompany, once coming to be habitual, also become necessities of life. If men would know the sacred pleasure of giving when they become rich, they must practise it while their riches are accumulating. Men who are penurious when comparatively poor, are almost certain to be penurious when rich. *E. G. Robinson.*

The voice of duty, while it requires us to recognize the source of our wealth and all our titles to it in God, bids us, in the right use of our faculties, and with true views as to the value of wealth and the way in which it is to be employed, make all we can—not, however, overtasking our powers, or interfering with the just claims of body and soul upon our time and attention. Industry is a Christian duty, and

vigor is a Divine gift, a talent God has given to be employed. The faithful use of our powers in their appropriate sphere, multiplying the conveniences and comforts of life to ourselves and others, giving us the means of influence and doing good, has the highest sanction of the Word of God. With right views and aims, we can be as truly serving God and working out the end of our probation in the field or in the workshop, as when we are found in the closet or prayer-meeting, giving each, however, its appropriate place. Except as the love of selfish gain interferes, we may work for God in seeking to increase the profits of our business and multiplying our means to bless the world. Let no man say that religion will spoil a businessman, even if it does forbid by solemn ordinance all unjust gain, the lie, or cheat. It bids us be industrious. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," is the Christian's motto. Make all the money you can, consistent with honesty and the higher interests of yourself and your fellow-man. It is only the right use of your talent which enables you to become more extensively and widely useful. *Gillett.*

God keeps an exact account of every penny that is laid out upon Him and His, and that is laid out against Him and His; and this in the last day men shall know and feel, though now they may or will not understand. *T. Brooks.*

20. Too much license is often taken, especially in free governments, in uttering words disrespectful of those in authority. Disloyal words come from disloyal thoughts. Disobedience begins in the "thought." To speak evil of dignities is both dangerous and wicked. "Thou shalt not revile the gods (magistrates), nor curse the ruler of thy people" (Ex. 22 : 28). Y.—The institution of magistracy cannot attain the ends for which it was designed, unless the persons of rulers be clothed with a degree of sanctity that shall shield them from popular reproach. One reason undoubtedly why the name of "god" was applied to magistrates was, that the office might be *sanctified* in general estimation, and that the conscience of him who held the office might be duly influenced by the consideration that he was in a sense acting as God's vicerent and representing His person, authority, and attributes among men. Accordingly we find the Apostle Paul distinctly recognizing the obligation of this law even in respect to one who was in fact a most unrighteous persecutor (Acts 23 : 2-5). *Bush.*

CHAPTER XI.

1 CAST thy bread upon the waters : for thou
 2 shalt find it after many days. Give a por-
 tion to seven, yea, even unto eight ; for thou
 knowest not what evil shall be upon the
 3 earth. If the clouds be full of rain, they
 empty themselves upon the earth : and if a
 tree fall toward the south, or toward the
 north, in the place where the tree falleth,
 4 there shall it be. He that observeth the
 wind shall not sow ; and he that regardeth
 5 the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest
 not what is the way of the wind, *nor* how
 the bones *do grow* in the womb of her that is
 with child ; even so thou knowest not the
 6 work of God who doeth all. In the morn-
 ing sow thy seed, and in the evening with-
 hold not thine hand : for thou knowest not

which shall prosper, whether this or that, or
 whether they both shall be alike good.
 7 Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing
 8 it is for the eyes to behold the sun. Yea,
 if a man live many years, let him rejoice in
 them all ; but let him remember the days of
 darkness, for they shall be many. All that
 cometh is vanity.

9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth ; and
 let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy
 youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart,
 and in the sight of thine eyes : but know
 thou, that for all these things God will bring
 10 thee into judgment. Therefore remove sor-
 row from thy heart, and put away evil from
 thy flesh : for youth and the dawn of life
 are vanity.

1. THE figure used here is found by some in the sowing of grain upon the fields while yet under water in the process of irrigation, or from the inundation of swollen streams ; and by others in the freighting of grain over the waters to distant markets—the returns from which might be only “after many days.” In either case “bread” would mean the grain of which bread is made. Whichever is the figure used, the sense is ultimately the same. Dispense thy charities liberally and look for returns in the distant future. H. C.—As the husbandmen sow beside all waters, or in moist and fruitful places, and after many days reap a bountiful harvest, so good and charitable deeds will in due time bring a harvest of blessedness to those who perform them. Do good ; seek to make others better and happier, is the purport of this exhortation. J. M. M.

Do we not see, no less than in the parable of the sower, the common work of man as a tiller of the ground turned into the symbol and token of his life as an heir of God’s kingdom ? The words of the Preacher say to each man in the common daily tasks in which his life is spent, to each in his vocation and ministry, Do that which is right and true always ; let acts of kindness be scattered freely. The seed never fails of fruit somewhere or at some time. The harvest may be a long way off, yet after many days *thou shalt find*. E. H. P.—Our reward for well-doing is very certain. “Though thou *cast it upon the waters*, and it seem lost, yet *thou shalt find it after many days*, as the husbandman finds his seed again in a plentiful harvest,

and the merchant his venture in a rich return. It is not lost, but well laid out and well laid up ; it brings in full interest, in the present gifts of God’s providence and graces and comforts of His Spirit, and the principal is sure, laid up in heaven, for it is *lent to the Lord*.” “*Thou shalt find it*, perhaps not quickly, but *after many days* ; the return may be slow, but it is sure, and will be so much the more plentiful.” Wheat, the most valuable grain, lies longest in the ground. Long voyages make the best returns. H.

Cast forth thy act, thy word, into the ever-living, ever-working universe ; it is a seed-grain that cannot die ; unnoticed to-day (says one) it will be found flourishing as a banyan-grove after a thousand years. *Carlyle*.—Such is God’s husbandry. Do the right deed. Do it in faith, and in prayer commend it to the care of God. And though the waves of circumstance may soon waft it beyond your ken, they only carry it to the place prepared by Him. And whether on an earthly or a heavenly shore, the result will be found, and the reaper will rejoice that he once was a sower. *Hamilton*.

The forgotten and unrecorded work lives in the blessed results to the doers. Whatever of recognition and honor we may miss here, we cannot be robbed of the blessing to ourselves, in the perpetual influence on our own character, of every piece of faithful even if imperfect service. Habits are formed, emotions deepened, principles confirmed, capacities enlarged by every deed done for Christ, which make an

over-measure of reward here, and in their perfect form hereafter are heaven. Nothing done for Him is ever wasted. Then let us do our work for Christ, not much careful whether it be greater or smaller, obscure or conspicuous, assured that whoever forgets us and it He will remember, and however our names may be unrecorded on earth they will be written in heaven, and confessed by Him before His Father and the holy angels. A. M.

2. This verse gives in part the interpretation of the parable, in part presents a new one. "Give a portion to seven;" yes, and if an eighth appear at thy gate, send him not away empty; let him be a welcome guest to thee. Do good not according to the measure which thou appointest to thyself, but to the opportunities that God gives thee. E. H. P.—In your charities be not confined to a single object, but have an interest in many; scatter abroad; the investments are safe; an evil day may come when you will need that mercy which you show to others. J. M. M.

"Give much, if thou hast much to give, not a pittance, but *a portion*, give *good measure*, be generous in giving, as they were, when, on festival days, they *sent portions to them for whom nothing was prepared* (Neh. 8:10) worthy portions." God is rich in mercy to all, to us, though unworthy, He *gives liberally, and upbraids not* with former gifts, and we must be merciful, as our heavenly Father is. H.—Every man should give as he has received. He cannot give more; he wrongs his Master and his brethren if he gives less. And be it little or much, God has a place for it, and a blessing for it. Large and conspicuous service is not to be undervalued; nor is the more quiet and restricted service to be despised. We may not say which is most vital or which God shall most bless. R. Cordley.

The Spirit of God is bound down to no man's method, and conforms His operations to no man's ideas of fitness. The Church is the product of the Divine Spirit, infinitely free and wise, using all sorts of agencies, and bringing men into the kingdom by just such methods as He sees best. Thus it is enforced upon us that we must sow our seed by all waters; with strong hands and feeble hands; in the Church and the Sabbath school, in the family and out by the waysides of life. Only we must sow in prayer; sow in tearful love; sow in humble confidence in Jesus; not knowing whether this or that shall prosper, but confident that in the end we shall return with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us. S. W. Fisher.

All life is unearned increase. We are so accustomed to think of our planting and our watering, our reaping and our storing, that many of us forget altogether, or remember it only slightly and occasionally, that God *gives* the increase. The seed is cast into the ground, and the farmer guards it and cultivates it, but neither blade nor ear nor full corn in the ear are made by these processes, nor do these processes give any equivalent for the rich gains of summer and autumn. The springing blade is the direct gift of God—an unearned increase which comes to the husbandman. H. C. T.

3. Calamities will come by a common law of human life, even as great storms come in the course of nature, and, coming, hurl down the trees of the forest to lie where they fall—that is, the effects of these calamities are more than transient, and are not easily remedied. Provide, therefore, wisely and abundantly against these seasons of disaster. H. C.

In regard to the "evil coming on the earth" (v. 2), the sweeping calamities that lie beyond man's control, he is as powerless as he is when the black clouds gather and the winds rush wildly. He knows only that the clouds will pour down their rain, that the tree will lie as the tempest has blown it down. Is he, therefore, to pause and hesitate and stand still? This question is answered in

4. Our ignorance of the future is not to put a stop to action. The very watching for opportunities may end in missing them. There are times when it is our wisdom to be "instant out of season." . . . All the great thinkers of the world tell us, as with one voice, that the future which God appoints will come, for good or evil, joy or sorrow; that it is unwise in any man to anticipate the worst. Let him do the right thing at the present hour, and then he has done all that in him lies to make his path clear, and he may leave the rest to God. No temper is more fatal to energy, manliness, usefulness, than that of anxiety and fear. E. H. P.

Unforeseen events come from God; and the man who is always gazing on the uncertain future will neither begin nor complete any useful work; but do thou bear in mind that times and circumstances, the powers of nature and the results to which they minister, are in the hand of God; and be both diligent and trustful. Anon.—What God has arranged we cannot alter, nor can we foretell what He will do. The husbandman, if he wait for the wind to come into what he deems a favorable quarter before he ventures to sow, may not sow in good time. If he depends on the appearance of the

clouds, and regards them as ominous of bad weather, then by delaying to sow in due time he will not reap a harvest. One must go straightforward in his duty, and not make this dependent on slight circumstances and uncertain omens. M. S.—If in sowing or reaping the husbandman is deterred by every sign of unfavorable weather, he may lose the fruits of his labor. So in the exercise of charity and in the discharge of duty generally, if we wait until every real or imaginary obstacle is put out of the way we shall lose the opportunity. We must attempt to do good in the face of obstacles and discouragements. J. M. M.

5. There are and will be things in God's providential administration of human affairs which thou canst not fathom to the bottom, just as in the processes of nature referred to we are compelled to confess our ignorance. Where animal life comes from, what it is in its essential nature, and many of its laws are matters too deep for our philosophy. H. C.—“*Thou knowest not the work of God*, nor is it fit thou shouldest; thou mayest be sure He will make good His word of promise, though He does not tell thee how, and though He works in a way by Himself, He will work, and none shall hinder; but then He will work, and the blessing shall work insensibly but irresistibly; God's work shall certainly agree with His Word, whether we see it or no.” H.

6. Ignorance as to the results of labor, still more, apparent or actual failure in earlier efforts, often tempt men to despondency or indolence. This maxim bids them take comfort, since the seed sown in the morning of life may bear its harvest at once, or not till the evening of age. The man may reap at one and the same time the fruits of his earlier and later sowing, and may find that “both alike are good.” E. H. P.

Therefore use wisdom and all due diligence. Let no hopeful means of good be omitted, sowing thy seed morning by morning, and at evening still let thy hand be active and thy heart earnest; for thou canst not tell which of the many things shall be successful. Do your whole duty and then calmly leave the issues with God. H. C.—To each of us our heavenly Father has given the germ of a life that can never die. The law of that life is, that nothing will be, nor can be lost. Its unconsidered fragments are like grains of seed-corn, full of infinite after-promise. Even as the field of the dead is God's acre, so is the field of living duty His harvest field. Jackson. (*Bampton Lectures.*)

God has lent us the earth for our life; it is a

great entail. It belongs as much to those who are to come after us and whose names are already written in the book of creation, as to us; and we have no right by anything that we do or neglect to involve them in unnecessary penalties, or deprive them of benefits which it was in our power to bequeath. And this the more because it is one of the appointed conditions of the labor of men that, in proportion to the time between the seed-sowing and the harvest, is the fulness of the fruit; and that generally, therefore, the further off we place our aim and the less we desire to be ourselves the witnesses of what we have labored for, the more wide and rich will be the measure of our success. Men cannot benefit those that are with them as they can benefit those who come after them; and of all the pulpits from which human voice is ever sent forth there is none from which it reaches so far as from the grave. Nor is there, indeed, any present loss in such respect for futurity. Every human action gains in honor, in grace, in all true magnificence, by its regard to things that are to come. It is the far sight, the quiet and confident patience, that above all other attributes separate man from man, and near him to his Maker; and there is no action nor art whose majesty we may not measure by this test. Ruskin.

All the materials essential to our well-being in both worlds, for the body, the mind, and the soul, for time and for eternity, God has provided, by His own unassisted and unmodified power, in that region of His working which is far above the reach of our own will and effort. But the well-being of man is never attained except he brings himself into harmony with all the conditions of the Divine bestowal. Sowing and reaping, toiling and gathering, *are* conditions with man, if not with birds and lilies. Withhold these, and man never reaches that state of physical well-being which was designed for him. He does not comply with those terms which are inseparable from the blessing. The sun may shine and the rain may fall, spring and summer through, and all the wealth of air and soil be bestowed munificently, but if man will not hold the plough, nor sow the seed, nor work at all, he will reap small advantage from the willing liberality of God. Precisely so is it in regard to God's spiritual munificence. W. Adams.

In the moral, as well as in the natural world, there is an appearance of waste and failure. Yet the impulse of benevolence must not from hence be discouraged, nor wait for the time of action till it has the fullest assurance of success.

We must learn to venture much, for we have often to cast our seeds of kindness "upon the waters," not knowing whither they will be carried; often, too, with as little prospect of reaping any ultimate good as if we scattered them upon the barren foam of the sea. The prospect of immediate success must not be our motive. We have to act upon higher and nobler principles. *We must learn to do good for its own sake. We must have faith in the imperishableness of good deeds. We must consider that the issues and rewards of our life are with God.* He knows all the issues of the good man's life, and all the riches of His sure recompense in eternity. These are greatly hidden from us here; therefore, in the mean time, we must learn the uses of that faith which ventures all. Venture is the very soul of the religious life, the attitude of the righteous toward the great things of God yet to be revealed; and the spirit of it penetrates all the forms of duty. *Homilist.*—If God scorns not apparent waste, ought we to scorn it, if the gain of it at last be only the winning or the edification of a single soul? O wearied toilers in the heat and dust of the day, the seed that ye have sown beside all waters, your unavailing sacrifices for others, your thankless labors by day and your fruitless tears by night, are not all wasted! The waste of faith and hope and love, lavished apparently in vain upon insensible hearts, will some day be seen to be no waste at all; and he who has shared in the sufferings of Christ shall, like his Divine Master, see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. And then we shall fully understand the gain of waste. S. S. T.

Thou knowest not whether shall prosper. If it is the morning seed that is to have the blessing, the preceding work of all thine evening may be necessary for it; and if it is the seed sown at evening which Divine grace shall choose, the toil of all the foregoing mornings of prayer and of effort may be just as necessary as the seed. This combined uncertainty and responsibility illustrate in an eminent degree the situation of parents in regard to their children. *Cheever.*—How little we know when we are doing our most effective work! How little we can tell whether shall prosper, this or that. A single word spoken in season; a helping hand in time of need; a tear of Christian sympathy; a prayer, winged heavenward by faith and love; a widow's mite cast into God's treasury, may be forgotten by the Christian toiler, but not by Him who is enthroned on high. He sees and hears and blesses; and so where the toiler hath trodden, flow-

ers bloom, and fountains spring, and harvests wave, and souls redeemed sing songs of joy. S. S. T.

7-10. Solomon now prepares to draw to a close. The dejection and sadness which pervade some of his utterances near the beginning are now gone. He has solved the problem which perplexed his mind, and we no more hear him say, as in chap. 2:17, "I hated life;" but he speaks, with the cheerfulness and animation becoming a true friend of God. J. M. M. —The remaining verses of the chapter are in another strain. Life is precious, and God has filled this world with many sources of pleasure; yet in the midst of your joy, forget not that days of darkness will come (vs. 7, 8). Let the young man enjoy the vigor of youth and its legitimate pleasures, yet evermore bearing in mind that God holds him responsible for all his moral life and will bring him into judgment (v. 9). Let him therefore banish discontent from his heart, and, observing the laws of health, prolong his youthful vigor to the utmost, for childhood and youth are subject to vanity—the failure and loss of earthly good (v. 10). H. C.

7. It cannot be denied that life is sweet; it is sweet to bad men because they have *their portion in this life*; it is sweet to good men, because they have this life as the time of their preparation for a better life; it is sweet to all men; nature says it is so, and there is no disputing against it; nor can death be desired for its own sake, but dreaded, unless as a period to present evils or a passage to future good. Life is sweet, and therefore we have need to double a guard upon ourselves lest we love it too well. II.

8. In the midst of the unbroken joys of youth and of prosperous life, let no man forget that far other scenes may be before him; that days of darkness will follow these days of light, for they surely will, and they may be many. H. C. —The whole system of worldly amusement is adapted to make us forget the real condition of human life, to disguise every object, and to invest the present state with a sort of theatrical glow. It is contrived, in every part of it, to banish reflection, to hide the future from the view, and to make us overlook the evils of life and the realities of eternity. But still, as the nature of things remains the same, the lot of mankind is, sooner or later, a state of suffering, from which no past successes, no seeming stability in our station, can possibly secure. It is wisdom, then, to form a just estimate of human life; to correct the illusions of our pas-

sions, and to regulate our expectations respecting the good and evil of the present, by the result of universal observation and experience. *R. Hall.*

9. Rejoice, cheer, walk. Here, as in chap. 9 : 7, the imperative mood is used, not exactly to express a command, but rather to encourage one who possesses certain gifts from God to remember that they come from God and are to be used in accordance with His will. W. T. B. —The Preacher frankly commends to youth a joyful, cheerful life as its natural and proper heritage. He does not invite to a feast, and then set up the skeleton of judgment at the table, to fill the feaster with fear and trembling. There is no covert irony in the call to rejoice. The judgment is brought in, but in a way which ministers to the rejoicing instead of clouding it. . . . Why may not the young man lawfully rejoice in his youth, provided he remembers his Creator? The mistake is in divorcing the Creator and Judge from the joy of life; whereas, God is the true joy of life. *Vincent.*

When he exhorts the young to make the best of life, and cheerfully to enjoy it, he throws in the salutary and soul-stirring caution, "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment." In other words, "Do all this, with the constant recognition and remembrance of the truth, that you are to give an account to God, for the manner in which you demean yourself amid all your enjoyments." M. S. —The precept expands itself to a wonderful richness and fulness of meaning by being understood affirmatively. It still forbids, indeed, by implication, unholy joy. For if we are to rejoice, and our rejoicing be limited and chastised by the thought of judgment, then surely unholy joy is altogether excluded. But besides this negative precept, which is only the indirect and secondary meaning of the verse, it also enforces holy joy, Christian rejoicing, such as that of which Paul writes, and that not only under the limitation implied by the prospect of judgment, but on the very ground of judgment to come. We are to rejoice, not now and then, when we forget judgment, death, and sin, but evermore; in youth no less than in manhood and old age; and for our life of Christian joy—for our omission to rejoice, if we omit it, for our ill-rejoicing, if we rejoice amiss, as for true and holy rejoicing, if, by the blessed Spirit of Christ duly cherished, we rejoice as we ought to do—we shall be judged, and in that judgment either saved by God's unspeakable mercy in Christ or condemned. *G. Moberly.*

It is not in itself sinful that a young man should rejoice in his youth, enjoying his youthful vigor and health; nor that his heart should be cheerful; nor that he should walk in ways pleasant and agreeable to himself, in harmony with the laws of his being, provided, however, always that he regulate his pursuit of pleasure *by a sense of his moral responsibilities to God.* It is vital here to draw the line between admissible cheerfulness, legitimate physical and social enjoyments on the one hand, and on the other, sinful indulgences, injurious, if not even ruinous to one's self or to others. The context forbids the construction which makes these verses ironical. The numerous parallel passages in the book suffice to settle this point definitely. (See chaps. 2 : 24; 3 : 12, 13, 22; 5 : 18–20; 8 : 15.) We must then include the passage before us in this class, and explain it as referring to the legitimate enjoyments of youth, bearing in mind, however, that the author wisely guards against excess and abuse by solemnly assuring the young man that in reference to this whole period of his life and to all its special and abundant sources of enjoyment *God will bring him into judgment*, not to condemn him for the wholesome enjoyment of youthful vigor, but for its sinful abuse; not for any pleasures that are legitimate, but for all that are illegitimate, pernicious, morally wrong. *H. C.*

In these words the writer falls back on the fact that, after all, this life is worth living, that it is wise to cultivate the faculty of enjoyment in the season when that faculty is, in most cases, capable of being fashioned into a habit. In good faith he tells the young man to "rejoice in his youth," to study the bent of his character, what we should call his æsthetic tastes, but all this is not to be the reckless indulgence of each sensuous impulse, but to be subject to the thought "God will bring thee into judgment." What the judgment may be the writer does not define. But the facts on which he dwells, the life of ignoble pleasure or tyranny or fraud carried on successfully to the very last, the unequal distribution of the pleasures and the pains of life, the obvious retort of the evil-doer that if this life were all men could take their fill of pleasure and evade the judgment of man, or the misery of self-made reproach and failure by suicide—all this leads to the conclusion that the "judgment" which the young man is to remember is "exceeding broad," stretching far into the unseen future of the eternal years. Faith at last comes in where reason fails, and the man is bidden to remember, in all the flush of life and joy, that "judg-

ment'' comes at last, if not in man's present stage of being, yet in the great hereafter. E. H. P.

Looking before the text and after it, thinking of the general scope and tendency of the whole Book of Ecclesiastes, one would say that all the text conveys is this great truth, which we all find out as we grow older, that the reckoning always comes. There is no harm in rejoicing in hopeful youth; God made youth for that. Only remember for steadying and sobering, not for saddening, that the reckoning will come; that through all these things you are sowing, and that you will reap by and by. Remember, then, that for all enjoyment, ay, for hard work and privation and trial too, the reckoning comes, the painful reckoning; for all these things God will bring you into judgment as for the enjoyments of your early days, and the reckoning may be a very heavy one. Even where the present frost is not the direct outcome of the past sunshine, no more sorrowful experience can be known by any human heart than the awful blankness which is expressed by the one word "gone." To have had and to have lost, that is the *judgment* in the text. A. K. H. B.

The light is acknowledged to be good and life pleasant. The young man is acknowledged in his natural freedom. His heart is allowed to cheer him in the days of his youth, and he may walk in the ways of his heart and the sight of his eyes. Life is good and to be enjoyed; yet it is always grave, and the account is always

running up against it. The true view is at once earnest and genial, bright yet always thoughtful, looking to the end from the beginning and forecasting the future, yet without anxiety, in the experience of the present. *Tulloch.*

10. The sense seems to be, Put away discontent from your heart and physical evils from your body. Cultivate the spirit of a cheerful contentment, and by carefully observing the laws of health, put from you, far as possible, the ills that flesh is heir to. God made your mind and body for much enjoyment; be careful, therefore, to study and obey the laws of life and happiness pertaining to both mind and body; for at the best childhood and youth are transient, and full of vanity. H. C.—The exhortation is founded on the solemn declaration which goes before, that God will bring him who walks in the ways of His heart and in the sight of His eyes into judgment. *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart*—put away that which is the chief cause of grief, sin, and those evil passions which lead to sin, and thus be at peace with thy judge. J. M. M.

Lives are worth living, if they answer the purpose for which they were given. And such lives, how ineffably sweet and fruitful they are! God's smile beams upon them, and all humanity is conscious of the fact. Some of them, perhaps most of them, are quiet lives—no ostentation, no bustle and stir, only earnest, faithful, and conscientious doing of whatever their hands find to do. *Hallock.*

CHAPTER XII., 1-7.

1 REMEMBER also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say,
2 I have no pleasure in them; while the sun is not darkened, nor the light, nor the moon, nor the stars, and the clouds return not after
3 the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look
4 out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the

daughters of music shall be brought low;
5 yea, they shall be afraid of *that which is* high, and terrors *shall be* in the way; and the almond tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:
6 while the silver cord is not loosed, nor the golden bowl broken, nor the pitcher broken at the fountain, nor the wheel broken at the
7 cistern; and the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it.

THE advice to lead an active life in the fear of God is here further enforced on the young

by the consideration (vs. 1-7) of the circumstances which accompany old age, when activ-

ity gradually becomes less and less possible, and finally ceases altogether so far as this world is concerned. W. T. B.

1. This verse stands in close relation with chap. 11 : 7-10, and especially vs. 9, 10, and should not have been separated in the arrangement of chapters. The young man, rejoicing in his youth, and passing cheerfully along through those days of health, hope, and high anticipation and of superabundant physical life, is exhorted to remember his Creator even then, in the morning of his youthful years. To "remember one's Creator" is more than simply to remember God. It is to think of God as your personal Creator, the Author of your very being and of all that wealth of blessings which He provides so profusely for the morning period of life. To be thus seriously mindful of our Creator is to feel our obligation to filial obedience and to grateful love and trust. H. C.—Gratitude to God as Creator (compare 11 : 5) is here inculcated as was previously (11 : 9) fear of God as Judge. In one word, godliness, acquired as a habit in youth, is recommended as the proper compensation for that natural cessation of youthful happiness which makes the *days* of old age more or less *evil*; more evil in proportion as there is less of godliness in the heart, and less evil where there is more godliness. W. T. B.

Remember thy Creator while your days are in their bud and blossom; while your hearts have not learned all the "deceitfulness of sin;" while your natures have not been corrupted by much knowledge of evil; while the world all about you is beautiful with the mysterious light of early days; while heart, and will, and habit are all fit to be moulded, and moulded aright; while you have not given pledges to the world by years of unbelief; while you have not a burden of transgressions, stretching through years to repent of; while you have life before you, that may be made sacred and beautiful, wise and righteous, full of Christ and a temple to God. A. M.

The days of evil here mentioned are the days of declining life, the infirmities and sorrows of which are most vividly painted in the sequel. Accumulated infirmities, with a certain prospect of their increase, are sufficient to account for the exclamation of the sufferer: *I have no pleasure in them!* M. S.

There comes again nothing like the first free burst of thought in youth; the intellect in later life, if its tone was not rightly taken earlier, becomes narrowed in proportion to its greater vigor; one thing it sees clearly, but it is blind

to all beside. It is in youth that the after tone of the mind is happily formed, when that natural burst of thought is sanctified and quickened by God's Spirit, and we set up within us to love and adore, all our days, the one image of the truth of God, our Saviour Jesus. Then, whatever else may befall us afterward, it rarely happens that our faith will fail; His image, implanted in us, preserves us amid every change. . . . To see one standing at the opening of life, with that large treasure of time and strength laid up as it were for many years, and knowing and feeling its value; with those light and sanguine spirits which will not be weighed down by the burden of life, yet burning to attempt its hardest duties—to see, in short, one fully loaded with God's gifts, and offering them all to God's service; one full of enjoyment, yet looking on every pleasure as God's free mercy, undeserved by himself, and not to be caught at, for his appointed portion here is to work and not to enjoy; to see one so rich for earth and heaven, might half tempt an older man to envy. But speaking more truly, it is not a sight for envy, but for the deepest joy and thankfulness, joy both of men and angels. We feel the charm of youth naturally, it cannot but awaken our interest even in itself; but when this natural interest is sanctioned by our soberest reason, when natural youth assumes, so to speak, the beauty of the spring of an eternal and a heavenly year, then it does fill us with the deepest joy; and this work of God's Spirit, far more than all those natural works, the creation of which was described in the lesson of this morning, is indeed very good. There is no more beautiful, no more blessed sight upon this earth, than a youth that is rich toward God. T. Arnold.

Observe that the ground or argument of the appeal is the *true happiness* of those to whom it is addressed. The whole story of Solomon lies behind and impresses this argument. Who are the blessed? and How is true blessedness to be attained? are the questions answered by Psalmists and Prophets. Their answers are expanded and pressed upon men's hearts by Christ and His apostles. Remember God *in youth!* When life is full of stir, and the energies pulsing with activity; when innumerable pleasures attract; when the days fly away unheeded; and when God, hidden behind His works and gifts, is disregarded and forgotten. *In thy youth!* When the heart is sensitive to impressions of spiritual goodness, purity, and truth; before it becomes blinded and hardened in the practice of evil, and so shuts out thought of God and good—Remember Him! Fix in thy heart just concep-

tions of His pure, wise, loving nature! Associate Him with all that is beautiful and beneficent in His visible working! Above all, rest your soul in hourly recollection upon the endearing characters and tender relations He avowedly sustains to you! So remember Him for thy truer happiness now. And so remember Him for thy peace in the coming days of decline and decay; that thine age may be serene and cheerful with hope of a deathless life. *Before the evil days come*, which *will* come if He be forgotten and neglected. *Evil* days, when social and sensual pleasures lose all zest and force of appeal; when there is left no resource for cheer, support, or hope. That such evil days *may never come*, therefore *remember God*, to thank and trust, to love and serve Him, *now in the days of thy youth!*

2. The second verse is a figurative expansion of the "evil days," and a general introduction to the verses that follow. B.—The figures are drawn from the natural world. The darkening of the great lights of heaven is one of the most common figures with the Hebrew writers for great and sad calamity. (See Ezek. 32 : 7, 8; Isa. 13 : 10; Joel 2 : 31 and 3 : 15; Amos 8 : 9; Rev. 6 : 12, 13, and Matt. 24 : 29.) The clouds returning after the great rain, when "storm after storm rises dark o'er the way," describe the rainy season of Palestine, when one storm passes away only to make room for another to follow, and a whole fair day is scarcely known. This represents forcibly the gloom and grief that hang over the old age of the ungodly. H. C.

3-6. *The touching appeal enforced by the sure, sad experiences of decline and decay.* This decay is in part prefigured by the ruin of a lordly castle, with its "keepers" and "strong men," its lofty windows and doorways. The details, given in all these figures, are singular but simple. The *keepers* and *strong men* refer to the arms and hands which act for and protect, and the limbs which support and carry, the body. All of these become feeble and tremulous, and fail of their appropriate offices. The reference to the *grinders*, though also a figure, is obviously to the loss of the teeth. Dimness of sight is intimated by the "darkening of those that look out of the windows." The *shutting of the doors* seems to refer to the closing of the ears, or perhaps, of all the senses, to outward impressions. The remainder of the verse (4) denotes the inability to enjoy the song of the worker or the bird; to take part in, or even appreciate, the music of voices or instruments. V. 5. Self-reliance is lost when strength is gone.

Uneven footways and the narrow, unsafe streets make the old man timid and fearful. Feebleness increases until he can walk no longer, nor even endure the least weight. The flowering almond tree, whose mass of snowy blossoms come forth in midwinter upon leafless stems, is a natural symbol of the white hair and beard of age. And (as the closing particular) *desire*, the very susceptibility to physical gratification, is gone. These experiences all foretell the time of departure from the temporary to the long eternal home; the day of death and burial. Then (v. 6) as the frail golden lamp, suspended by silk and silver cord, is broken and emptied by the fall when the cord is severed, so the body is emptied of its indwelling spirit when the thread of its animate life is sundered. Or, as the pitcher and wheel, by which water is gathered from fountain and well, are useless when broken, so the bodily organs, which collect and distribute vital nourishment, are finally shattered and disabled by death. B.

5. The almond-tree shall blossom. The *point* of the figure is doubtless the fact that the *white* blossoms completely cover the whole tree without any mixture of green leaves, for these do not appear until some time after. It is the expressive type of old age, whose hair is white as wool, unrelieved with any other color. W. M. Thomson.

Desire. Literally, *the caper-berry*. This berry, which was eaten before meals as a provocative to appetite, shall fail to take effect on a man whose powers are exhausted. **Long home.** Literally, "eternal house." Considering that the word "eternal" may be used here in a restricted sense, the expression *long home* (which has become a household word among ourselves) appears to represent the Hebrew fairly. Man's "eternal house" is his place in the next world. Without attributing to the author of Ecclesiastes that deep insight into the future life which is shown by the writer of the Epistles to the Corinthians, we may observe that He by whom both writers were inspired sanctions in both books (see 2 Cor. 5 : 1-6) the use of the same expression "eternal house." In 2 Cor. it means that spiritual body which shall be hereafter; and it is placed, as it is here (see v. 3), in contrast with that earthly dissolving house which clothes the spirit of man in this world. W. T. B.

It is not at his death only that it may be said of any man, "He goeth to his long home." It is a continual present tense. Every moment, every step he takes, he is always on the road, getting nearer and nearer. Eternity is an abyss.

in which the mind loses itself in a moment ; and the more we try to realize, the more impossible it grows. And because we have never seen it or conceived it, we call some earthly thing, some work, some waiting-time, some sorrow, some suffering, "long." But we shall never call it long again when we have looked out into the immensities which lie on the other side the horizon of this little world. But that life the Infinite Himself calls "long." "Man goeth to his long home." If that is home, we are travellers here. And every day should be a step homeward. We must not pitch our tents as if they were houses, for they will soon be taken down. We must not stop by the way to pick many flowers, and we must not care for little discomforts and disagreeable things as we go, seeing that our halting-places are only inns. If that is home, this is school. Hence the discipline. Life is all training. We have much to unlearn and much to learn, many habits to lose and many habits to form, before the minority of our existence here shall have fitted us for the maturity of our glorified manhood. *J. Vaughan.*

6. Death is here represented under two beautiful and striking emblems, the destruction of the lamp of life and of the machinery at the fountain of life. It connects as v. 2 and the last clause of v. 1 with the injunction with which v. 1 begins. Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, *while the silver cord is not loosed, nor the golden bowl broken.* W. H. G. —The termination of life is signified generally by the breaking of a lamp, a pitcher, and a wheel; it seems unnecessary to assign to those images respectively different parts or functions of the body, all which end at death. The silver cord by which the lamp hangs from the ceiling snaps, and the cup or reservoir of oil is dashed in pieces by the fall, and the pitcher long used to bring water from the spring is shattered ; and the wheel by which a bucket is let down into the well is broken. W. T. B.

The metaphor by which loss of life is denoted is borrowed from a lamp suspended from a ceiling by a silver cord. The golden bowl is the bowl or reservoir of oil, from which it is distributed into the branches, in which the wicks are placed, from which the lights proceed. (See Zech. 4 : 2 ; Job 29 : 3.) The cord by which this golden bowl or reservoir of oil is suspended, being decayed with age, giving away, and so suffering the bowl of oil to fall upon the floor and be broken, and thus extinguish the lamps, affords a striking image of the breaking up of the human machine and the extinction of

its life, which by a very common metaphor is said to be suspended on a brittle thread. We need not inquire what internal part of the body is denoted by the silver cord or the golden bowl ; whether by the former is denoted the spinal marrow, the nerves, the veins, or arteries ; or whether by the golden bowl is denoted the heart, the brain, etc., since it is extremely doubtful whether the preacher refers to either. By the images of the broken bucket and wheel, in consequence of which no water could be procured, is set forth the decay and dissolution of the human body through age, in consequence of which life cannot be retained in it. Some have undertaken to point out what internal part of the body was denoted by the bucket, the fountain, the wheel and the cistern ; I do not think that the preacher intended such a particular application of the terms. *Noyes.*

7. *What becomes of man's two natures at death?* Each goes to its original source. The body is resolved to dust again ; the spirit returns unto God who gave it. One ceases from existence until it is raised again at the fiat of God. The other has no cessation or pause of existence ; its life continues on in the vision of God. Here is an absolute affirmation of the immortality of the human spirit ! B.

Man is something more than vitalized clay. The breath of God imparted to the human form something more than animal life. The inspiration of the Almighty gave him understanding. He was made in the likeness of his Maker. He received a rational and intelligent nature. The soul is not the product of matter, nor any accident or modification of matter. It is a distinct existence, distinct in its origin, distinct in its nature. Though united, the body and the soul each preserves its own separate quality. The one is dust, the other is spirit. The one was fashioned by God's fingers, the other came from God's own life. This distinction is recognized throughout the whole of Scripture. What we call death is the dissolution of this fellowship and conjunction between the body and the soul. So saith the Scripture : "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." *W. Adams.*

Then shall the dust return. The creation of man, as described in Gen. 2 : 7 (compare 3 : 19), is evidently referred to. W. T. B. —Although it is true that these bodies themselves are constantly dissolving into air, that the material atoms which compose them will in a few short weeks all be gone, and that there is nothing but the shadow of our forms which we

can call our own, we must also remember that there is a mysterious principle within, constantly renewing and repairing our wasting frames—a cunning architect superintending a thousand builders who are constantly reconstructing, with materials prepared by vegetation, the bones, the muscles, and the nerves, as fast as they are wasted and consumed; making, in a most mysterious way, beyond all human comprehension, here the fibre of a muscle, there the filament of a nerve, here building up a bone, there uniting a tendon, fashioning each with scrupulous nicety, and fitting each to its place with never-failing skill. But no sooner is the work of the architect done, than another great power comes in to destroy it. The oxygen gas which the blood absorbs in the lungs and carries to the different parts of the body burns up these carefully elaborated tissues, converting them into carbonic acid, water, and ammonia, which pass into the atmosphere, from which they originally came. Life is, in fact, a constant struggle between the builders and the destroying element of the air; and when its short term is ended, and the builders cease because they are wearied and few, then “the dust returns to the earth as it was.” *Cooke.*

The spirit shall return. The fact here stated by the inspired writer is simply that the spirit, being separated at death from the body, returns to God. No more is said here of its future destiny. To return to God, who is the Fountain of Life, certainly means to continue to live. The doctrine of life after death is implied here as in Exod. 3 : 6, and in many other passages of Scripture earlier than the age of Solomon. W. T. B.—There is in each one of us a “spirit.” It is the higher part, the nobler, the more godlike. It contains the “willing,” of which the body does the “running.” It contains the grand, capacious intellect; the beautiful, generous feeling; the pure, unselfish affection; the power of believing, hoping, loving; the faculty of praying; the capacity of knowing, of communing, and holding converse with God. The “spirit” may be dragged down; may be secularized, carnalized, brutalized. If we will sow to the flesh, we can reap corruption; and that corruption shall spread itself till there is nothing left of mind but its cunning, and nothing left of spirit but its indestructibility. It is there; it cannot be extinguished; the spark once put to it, the fire must burn on. There is, at the moment of death, a “returning of the spirit to God who gave it.” The profitable thing for us is to anticipate, in its certainty and in its simplicity,

that “return.” “The spirit shall return to God who gave it.” C. J. V.

The world is nothing more than one great, continuous grave. As it swings around the sun in its accustomed orbit, like a true mother, it carries the dust of her children in her bosom! Ye heavenly hosts, ye look down upon it from above, and we are almost among you. Thither flies the spirit, at the moment when it parts from its earthly shell. There shall we be ever united with all who have gone before us; and often shall we direct our glances of sympathy and sorrow toward our early home. Finally comes the hour; the seed is ripe for the harvest; the human race is ripe for judgment. The Lord descends with His angels; the graves open upon the heaving earth; and the glorified dust is united with the soul’s spiritual body. This we see in the spirit; herein are we absorbed; for this conviction we thank the Saviour whose grave quaked in the hour of His resurrection; and more mighty, more powerful grows in us the life of that faith which does not doubt of what it has not yet seen. *Theremin.*

The dust of the human frame returns to its kindred dust; but the spirit, of far higher nature, the very breath of God (Gen. 2 : 7), returns to God who gave it; not to be absorbed again into the essence of the Divine Being; not to lose its personality, its individual consciousness, or its moral responsibility; but to receive from God its reward according to its moral life in the body. This doctrine of future retribution forever precludes the pantheistic notion of the absorption of the human soul at death into the being of God Himself. The doctrine that all human souls have their existence directly from God, so that He is strictly and properly “the Father of all spirits,” appears in both the Old Testament and the New. See Num. 16 : 22, where it occurs in the prayer of Moses and Aaron; also again in the words of Moses (Num. 27 : 16); so the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (12 : 9). That the soul, thus related to God as its Father, should return to Him at death, is due also and especially to its moral nature and moral relations and responsibilities. That this was the doctrine of the ancient Jewish teachers appears even in the Chaldee paraphrast who translates our verse: “The living spirit will return to stand in judgment before God who gave it to thee.” The same doctrine underlies this Book of Ecclesiastes, cropping out not unfrequently throughout the course of its discussions, and brought forth most distinctly and emphatically at the close. (See 3 : 17, 21; 5 : 8; 8 : 8, 12, 13; 11 : 9; 12 : 14.) And what can be

more reasonable? For the gift of intellectual faculties devolves the obligation to know God. The gift of a moral power to obey and love God creates the obligation to obedience and love. God therefore has an account to settle with all those beings to whom He has committed such exalted powers, and hence their spirits must return to Him at death to meet this responsibility and to render this account. H. C.

The bodies of men after death return to dust and see corruption, but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none. *West. Confession*. If any one thing is made clear by the whole drift and structure of revelation, it is this, that probation begins and ends with this life. Our Lord's teachings suggest neither doubt of this fact nor exceptions to it. Apostolic instruction suggests neither. This is not a subject on which it is reasonable to believe that a revelation from heaven has taught nothing. The when and the where of probation enter into the very fact of probation. The Scriptures furnish as much evidence that our probation began in a former world as that it will be continued or supplemented in a world to come. Regenerate character, started into being here, may be improved, developed, finished in a future life, which is not the perfected heavenly life. But this is education, and education is not probation. It is probation which determines the great moral distinction of character as right or wrong; and this the Bible assumes to be the work of one life, and one only. On the deeds done in the body the retributive experience depends. The validity of these views is not affected unfavorably by the fact that the Scriptures nowhere expressly affirm the non-existence of probation in the life to come. It is not the usage of inspiration to affirm negatives. *Phelps*.

With all that is said and assumed and argued for, and stiffly asserted, as regards the fact of a second trial hereafter, the whole world tacitly concedes, nevertheless, that no such new condition is, in fact, expected. For no unbeliever, no practically godless and really apostate believer, no bad man groaning under his vices, no

drunkard writhing under his chains, no scoffing Altamont overtaken by remorse, no human creature, whether uninstructed Pagan or best instructed philosopher, and (what is most significant of all) no loosest, largest freethinker, who asserts most confidently the faith of a second trial hereafter, goes out of life talking of the new chance now to be given him, and the high, free time he is going to have, in the more propitious trial that will suffer him to mend his defects and the consciously bad ways that have corrupted him. All such advocates of a basement gospel, under the world and after the grave, convince themselves, by what they consider most indisputable and profoundly wise arguments, that their ultimatum gospel, their posthumous salvation, will have power to mend all damage and smooth away all woes of character begun; but when we look to see those deep, natural instincts, which are always the spontaneous interpreters of our humanity, giving out their indications, we find our believers in the underworld opportunity clinging fast to life, as if they had no such faith at all in them, recoiling with instinctive shudder from death, and hailing never in glad welcome the better day now come to help their recovery; in which they may discover, as plainly as need be, themselves, that their arguments are one thing, and the verdict of their immortal, deep-discerning judgments another. They contrive how it is to be, they reason, they promise, they encourage; but their always demonstrative nature nowhere runs up a flag of hope or gives any slightest indication. If the question be whether we are immortal, all the flags of natural hope are out streaming on every hill; but here expectation is dumb and shows no sign! *Bushnell*.

Waste your youth; in it you shall have but one chance. Waste your middle life; in it you shall have but one chance. Waste your old age; in it you shall have but one chance. It is an irreversible natural law that character attains final permanence, and in the nature of things final permanence can come but once. This world is fearfully and wonderfully made, and so are we, and we shall escape neither ourselves nor these stupendous laws. It is not a pleasant thing to exhibit these truths from the side of terror; but on the other side these are truths of bliss, for by this very law through which all character tends to become unchanging, a soul that attains a final permanence of good character runs but one risk, and is delivered once for all from its torture and unrest. It has passed the bourne from behind which no man is caught out of the fold. He who is the force behind all nat-

ural law is keeper of His sheep, and no one is able to pluck them out of His hand. Himself without variableness or shadow of turning He maintains the irreversibleness of all natural forces, one of which is the ineffably majestic law by which character tends to assume final permanence, good as well as bad. *Joseph Cook.*

Nothing is more difficult than to realize that every man has a distinct soul, that every one of all the millions who live or have lived is as whole and independent a being in himself as if there were no one else in the whole world but he. Survey some populous town; crowds are pouring through the streets; every part of it is full of life. Hence we gain a general idea of splendor, magnificence, opulence, and energy. But what is the truth? Why, that every being in that great concourse is his own centre, and all things about him are but shades, but a "vain shadow," in which he walketh and disquieteth himself in vain. He has his own hopes and fears, desires, judgments, and aim; he is everything to himself, and no one else is really anything. He has a depth within him unfathomable, an infinite abyss of existence; and the scene in which he bears part for the moment is but like a gleam of sunshine upon its surface. All those millions upon millions of human beings who ever trod the earth and saw the sun successively are at this very moment in existence all together. If we have once seen any child of Adam, we have seen an immortal soul. It has not passed away as a breeze or sunshine, but it lives; it lives at this moment in one of those many places, whether of bliss or misery, in which all souls are reserved unto the end. Every one of all the souls which have ever been on earth is in one of two spiritual states, so distinct from one another that the one is the subject of God's favor and the other under His wrath, the one on the way to eternal happiness, the other to eternal misery. This is true of the dead, and it is true of the living also. Endeavor then to realize that you have souls, and pray God to enable you to do so. Endeavor to disengage your thoughts and opinions from the things that are seen; look at things as God looks at them, and judge of them as He judges. There will be no need of shutting your eyes to this world when this world has vanished from you, and you have nothing before you but the throne of God and the slow but continual movements about it in preparation of the judgment. In that interval, when you are in that vast receptacle of disembodied souls, what will be your thoughts about the world which you have left? How poor will then seem to you its highest aims, how

faint its keenest pleasures, compared with the eternal aims, the infinite pleasures, of which you will at length feel your souls to be capable. *Newman.*

The man of the world is reconciled to his sins, and not to his state. The man of piety is in hostility to his sins, and reconciled to his state. The men of the world are always changing their state, and imagining a happiness which continually flies from them. It is the same in every period of life. In youth, the objects of the world not being tried, they think themselves at liberty to take excursions after happiness, and place it in the gratification of their passions. Weary of these, they become men, and then pursue riches and aspire after grandeur and consequence, but soon find that these have their cares and anxieties. When they become old, they look with equal contempt upon both periods; for both appear to them like a confused dream, that leaves nothing but a succession of images, which have lost their charms. But piety will produce satisfaction with our condition, and prevent the indulgence of the passions. In fact, in every way and at all periods it will preserve them; in youth, in manhood, and in advanced age. It will teach men that they have one solid good to obtain, and that time is short for attaining it. Dejection and gloom can have no place in that man who, having spent his life in serving God, looks forward to glory, honor, and immortality. *R. Hall.*

A young man, when won over to habits of sober-minded piety, has it in his power to cultivate a rounded, harmonious, beautiful life, which grows serener and calmer to its end. And if such a young man reaches the boundaries of old age, what a blessed sight is he! The fire of anger, which he has controlled his life-long, plays only in a genial flame of indignation against sin. Those baser appetites, which cost him perhaps many a struggle to overcome, have died out of his character. Covetousness, as it never filled him with evil cravings in his manhood, so has no torment of miserly fears for his old age. His brow of peace tells of numberless triumphs over sin, followed by undisturbed repose. Such an old age of dignity and peace, when we see it among us, is a purifying power in society—it is a protest against exaggerated feelings and excited desires, it is a forerunner of heavenly rest. Compare it, in its tranquillity and noiseless movement, with the disappointment, the self-reproach, the weariness and emptiness of a worldling who feels the bitter penal sobering of life in its drégs, and see in it the beauty of the Gospel. *Woolsey.*

God will remember those in age who remember Him in youth or manhood. This compensating, sustaining fact is mercifully set over against the coming experiences of natural weakness and decay. To all who have acknowledged God in earlier life; to all who have consecrated their powers of body and mind to the Redeemer's service while yet those powers were active and unimpaired, the Divine Jesus will manifest a tender, affectionate remembrance in the days of darkness and weariness. He will put forth His efficient sympathy and aid to light and cheer the closing experiences of the aged believer's heavenward pilgrimage. When the bodily energies yield, and the mortal fabric crumbles, when the strong arm and the stout heart are alike palsied by the hand of time, when the pleasure-giving senses lose their susceptibility, when the eye is filmed, the ear is closed, the taste is dull, and the voice is inaudible, then will the indwelling Comforter afresh recall and impress with deepening power the promise of a new and glorified body, associated with whose incorruptible structure a renewed youth and vigor shall commence and be perennially enjoyed. So, too, when in the painful retrospect of life's fruitless toil and its parted friendships and vanished earthly hopes, the aged believer is burdened with an unutterable loneliness and sadness, and his heart is filled with longing for lasting repose and an abiding fellowship, then will this gracious Comforter whisper peace to his spirit in the anticipation of a rest where weariness and sighing and sorrow are forever banished. He will breathe a sweet, calming assurance of speedy welcome to that celestial sphere where not only former friendships shall be revived, but where the purer, closer, more blessed fellowship with redeemed and angelic spirits and with God Himself shall impart perfect, enduring delight. With such blessed assurances and such bright prospects will the present Jesus sustain and cheer the closing days of the soul that has trusted itself to His keeping, and sought to walk with Him through life. And thus sustained and cheered, he can patiently, peacefully wait all the days of his appointed time until his change come. B.

The Near Look, and the Far.

Faith in the *far* or future life is necessary to wise walking through *this* life. The far life blotted out, or severed from the present, the present becomes insignificant, and almost utterly unmeaning. This life darkens and degenerates, becomes weariness, mockery, despair, as soon as it is separated from another. The sky seems

to fall down; the horizon closes in; the far lights are swallowed up of the deepening darkness, and nothing is left us to do but to die. "Life and immortality" are abolished, and death is "brought to light," or throned in darkness rather, by this gospel. And this is the best that can be said, is it, in justification of a life the full scope and last end of which are found among visible things? It is a poor life on its own showing. It can give no account of its origin, no explanation of its mysteries, no motive for its virtues, no consolation for its inevitable sorrows, no satisfaction for its own yearnings, no hope for its close. It is contradicted and denied by the living soul of man, by the instinct of immortality in the breast, by the sense of God which in one way or other all great minds and true hearts attain unto, by all our expansive powers and upward longings, by imagination, by faith, by hope, by love, by the word of God, by Jesus Christ in all His teachings, and by His resurrection and ascension into heaven. No man who only takes the near look can live, or act, or suffer, or die as a man should. Still further. Against such a life there lies this consideration, which it is really not easy to state in all its force, but which would be felt as having tremendous power, if it were duly understood and apprehended—this, that there is no natural probability that the latter part of life will be different in spiritual character from the former; that there is a strong probability that it will be the same; in circumstance and sensation very different, but in substance and principle the same. Enough. This life of scope so limited is no life for any of us to lead. It is too narrow for our greatness, too hollow for our satisfactions, too impure for our affections. It exhausts our energies, mocks our expectations, and will soon fade forever from our sight. But *the life with the upward aspect and the far look is a life of peculiar dignity.* On what, on whom, is this far-reaching gaze fixed? On the most perfect things, on the most glorious persons in the universe. On a world which is the harvest-home of other worlds. On "a city which hath foundations," and which is the only city of which God professes Himself the sole builder. On a grand celestial commonwealth, in which men and angels meet as brothers. On a vast cosmical harmony, or "gathering together in one all things in Christ." On "spirits of just men made perfect." On "innumerable companies of angels." On "Jesus the Mediator." On "God, the Judge of all." Where shall we find elevation and grandeur, if not in such a scene, in such society, as this? How poor in

the comparison are the thrones and dignities of the present life, the scenes of enjoyment and the notable assemblies! Yonder are the true fountains of honor! the true seats of power! the true aristocracy of the universe! Higher no man can look than up to God's chief dwelling-place. Nobler no man need wish to be than to be meet for association with *His* nobles and sons. And observe, such meetness is greatly promoted simply by the looking. A man becomes great in the loving contemplation of such greatness. So we are said, in some Scriptures of deep meaning, not only to look, but to see; not only to seek, but to find. "*We are come,*" already, now, "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God." In our faith and fellowship, and love and longing, "*we are come.*" In the strongest laws of our being we belong even now to this celestial state. "Our conversation, or citizenship, is in heaven." The angels make mystical encampings about the steps of faithful men everywhere. The spirits made perfect are drawing us by all the sainted memories they have left behind, and by the irrepressible yearnings of our souls to follow until we overtake and grasp inseparable hands. And a far-looking soul becomes *great* as it gazes upward to home, and rest, and glory. A heaven-bound pilgrim has a shining face and a lordly air to those who can see. Since the "high calling" came, he can but look to "the mark" of it. Since he was gifted with spiritual sonship he can but hasten home to the house of many mansions. Since he was made a peer of the upper realms he can but gather up his garments in passing through the lower, and keep himself in reserve for eternal friendships and honors. Thus a wonderful dignity is thrown around a human life as soon as invisible things decisively become its scope and end.

The far look brings purity into the mind. Directly and powerfully as though it drew it down from the skies. If there be one desire more essentially characteristic than another of a Christian state, and of progress in that state, it is the approbation and love of purity, or the perfect moral goodness of Jesus Christ. This is "the spirit of Christ," which "if any man have not he is none of His." This is the "hunger and thirst after righteousness" which whoso hath is blessed, for "he shall be filled."

The far look has in it a wonderful power of composure. It holds the looking mind as in an element of Divine tranquillity amid the stir and tumult, amid the daily changes and troubles of this world. One fretted with cares and strifes and the many ups and downs of life looks away

to the victor throngs gathering on the shores and mountain-sides of the "better country," and then he chides his discouragement by thinking, "Haply, I shall soon be among them!" Many a calm hour does heaven thus drop down about the steps of her home-going sons and daughters, which, otherwise, they never would find. Many a touch of coolness she sheds on hot hand and fevered brow. And as day after day come and go, one and another who have learned to take the long look, find a straight path for their feet, through some of the busiest and most perplexing scenes of the cities here below, by holding firmly in hand the roll of citizenship above, and by sometimes thinking, if but a moment at a time, of the day of joyful entrance.

Finally, *The far look brings a peculiar assuagement of suffering, and sorrow, and affliction of every kind.* Listen to the apostle's wonderful words: He counts his affliction "*light,*" although it is thus actually sinking him to the grave. He says it is "*but for a moment,*" although it had lasted from his conversion to that time, and, he knew, would last on to the day of his martyrdom! How, then, is this? What is the explanation of such a mystery? Here is the blessed explanation. The master power, the transmuting, transforming element in this great process, is nothing else than his soul's "*far look,*" at "*things not seen,*" at "*things eternal.*" That look changes all. It makes affliction, which is very heavy in itself, "*light,*" by bringing it into contrast with immortal joy; which is long in itself, but momentary, by measuring it with eternal duration. The same look will do for us what it did for him, what it has done for so many of God's children since. It will fill our souls, and even our bodies in a measure, with a sense of heavenly assuagement. It will impart "a strong consolation." "In all these things" it will make us "more than conquerors."

And what shall we more say? This life of the far look has been commended by the celestial *dignity* which it gathers as it grows; by the *purity* and goodness which it wins from the skies; by its power to generate *tranquillity* amid the hurry of this world's affairs, and by its mastery of all *trouble* and affliction—we might even say, of *death*. What other kind of life could do as much, or almost anything at all, in the like ways? What force can match with this tremendous energy, which lifts immortal souls from one world up to another? What fire of mortal kindling will burn as doth the flame of Christian hope, up through the deepest earthly

darkness, and beyond the light of sun or star? What wings of human thought or fancy can soar into a region so high, so pure, so fair? And shall the wings be folded? Shall the fire be covered? Shall the force be latent? Shall the life be held in sleep, or swoon, or trance? Shall we not be ourselves? Shall we not be,

and seem, our best? Are we ashamed to acknowledge our celestial friends? Are we afraid of being home too soon? Child of the light and of the day, look upward, homeward, to the land of lights, and God give thee ever clearer sight and stronger helps until the day of thine arrival! *A. Raleigh.*

CHAPTER XII., 8-14.

- 8 VANITY of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity.
 9 And further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered, and sought out, *and* set in
 10 order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, *even* words of truth.
 11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails well fastened are *the words of* the masters of assemblies [or, *collectors of sen-*

- tences*], *which* are given from one shepherd,
 12 And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh
 13 *This is* the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole *duty* of
 14 man [or, *this is the duty of all men*]. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

8-14. THIS passage is properly regarded as the epilogue of the whole book. Here, as in the beginning of the book, the Preacher speaks of himself in the third person. He first repeats (v. 8) the mournful, perplexing theme with which his musings began (1:2); and then states the encouraging practical conclusion (13, 14) to which they have led him. Between these he interposes four verses (9-12), asserting his claim to come forward as a teacher, his intention to teach with no unnecessary obscurity, the usefulness and authority of such teaching, and the folly of protracted, unpractical meditation (compare 11:4); this brings him to the practical end (vs. 13, 14) of the epilogue and of the whole book. These verses have the same authority with the Christian reader as the rest of this book; for they were received as an integral part of the book by the Jewish Church long before the time of our Lord. The whole passage serves to make the book more intelligible and more acceptable. W. T. B.

8-12. *General summing up of the book or sermon.* V. 8 repeats the text for the last time. Transitoriness and dissatisfaction are the main ideas denoted by the word *vanity*. V. 9 declares the object of the Preacher, to teach the people knowledge; and his fitness to teach by reason of his wisdom and earnest endeavor. V. 10 refers to his effort to make his teaching acceptable; and it affirms that he has taught

the truth. V. 11 discloses *the purpose and effect of truth* as taught by all wise and faithful teachers. The words of such are as *goads* to stir the heedless to thought, to excite the sluggish to active obedience and duty. They are as *nails* to fasten truth in the memory and to make obedience habitual. This truth, it is intimated, is to be taught by those who are themselves instructed by one Shepherd, even Christ. And v. 12 is designed to impress the supreme value of Divine wisdom and revealed truth as compared with all that is human and uninspired. This one book of God, unlike the multitude of human productions, conveys truth without error. It absorbs, enriches, and delights mind and heart without weariness in study or exhaustion of its sublime and satisfying themes. B.

The aim of Coheleth, in all that he has said, has been to speak "acceptable words," full of the honey-sweetness of Divine truth—"upright sayings," words of righteousness, with power to pierce the soul. This is characteristic of all wise teaching. It has a sweetness that glides into the heart, and at the same time a sharpness that penetrates the conscience, as a nail fastened in a sure place. Now, at the end, speaking to a son, after the manner of Solomon in the Proverbs, the Preacher exhorts him not to seek his welfare in many books, for literature no more than mirth can constitute man's welfare, or

supply his chief good. "Fear God and keep His commandments." A conclusion quite similar to that of Job in his quest after wisdom. He sought for it in the mines and deep places of the earth; and the conclusion of the matter he found to be this, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." This was the height of the Hebrew "Chokmah," or philosophy of wisdom and life. As David is the great poet, so is Solomon the great philosopher. And as David's Psalms, read in the light of Christ and the Gospel, are still at the height of sacred poetry; so Solomon's teachings and reflections, read in the same light, are at the summit of wisdom still. A child-like reverence for God, including the fear of displeasing Him, and the desire to obey Him from the heart—this is right, and to love Him with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind is the great commandment. D. F.

8. All is vanity. Obviously this introduces the closing section of the book, the concluding remarks. Hence he repeats the sentiment which more than any other has been his leading theme, the utter vanity of all things that are merely of the earth—sensual and worldly enjoyments. H. C.—The writer has gone through the whole round of human employment and enjoyment; and he comes out at last fully with the sentiment which he announced at the beginning. *Solid, lasting, and unchanging happiness is not to be found in any worldly occupation, or in any worldly circumstances.* God has impressed this truth on everything and made it visible everywhere. M. S.—Solomon has proved in this book *that if there be no hereafter, no future day of righteous adjudication, then vanity must be predicated of the "all," the universe.* J. M. M.

10. The writer does not mean merely that he first sought for proper words and then proceeded to write the same down, but he means to convey the additional idea that *he wrote words of truth*, as well as acceptable words. M. S.—If the preacher be wise, he will search out and set in order words that shall be acceptable, yet words of truth and life; he will press into his service all his powers of wit, humor, argument, tenderness; he will seek to dip the arrows of conviction in healing balms, to carry guiding and comfortable rays into the darkness of doubt or grief, to rebuke successful wrong with an indignation that shall burn like a fire, and to lift up patient, unsuccessful merit by force of sympathy and love. He will consecrate all his faculties and energies to the service of his Master, to the endeavor to carry the very truth to

the hearts of his brethren. But the defence and exposition of the truth will be his supreme aim. He will care more for *what* he teaches than for *how* he teaches it. Cor.

Acceptable words. Reflect on your own thoughts, actions, circumstances, and—which will be of special aid to you in forming the habit of reflection—accustom yourselves to reflect on the words you use, hear, or read, their birth, derivation, and history. For if words are not things, they are living powers by which the things of most importance to mankind are actuated, combined, and humanized. Coleridge.—If we could obtain the opinions of such authors as Horace, in Latin, or Bacon and Addison, in English, and, in the sacred tongue, that most wise "Preacher who sought to find out acceptable words," we should think more highly of the study of words. What careful writer has not remarked how the entire character of a statement has been changed—has passed from ambiguity to clearness, from feebleness to strength, from awkwardness to grace—by the substitution of one epithet for another, or by the insertion, or even simply by the omission of an epithet? He surely is a stranger to the elements of power in speech who does not endeavor to be skilful in the use of words. Skinner.

11. From speaking of his own work, he passes to speak in a more general way of all the words of the wise, with special reference, it would seem, to the other inspired books of the Old Testament, then extant. These words of wise men are as goads; they have a piercing, penetrating power. They commend themselves to the good sense of mankind and to their conscience no less, and therefore take fast hold of the human soul. So the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (4:12). H. C.—**As goads, and as nails well fastened.** No figures could more aptly typify the two offices of sacred teaching: the one immediate in its effect, pricking the conscience, stimulating the soul; the other, permanent and durable, depending upon the concurrent action of the hearer, in so admitting and retaining the impression, that it shall pass from the region of impulse and excitement into the domain of principle, of conduct, of life. C. J. V.

The word translated "assemblies," it is now conceded by the best critics, refers not to assembled persons, but to *collected manuscripts*, constituting the recorded wisdom of the wise (the "words of the wise" in the first clause), with probable reference to the inspired books then extant. H. C.—Collected or put to-

gether, as they are in the Book of Proverbs, they are as nails fastened or well driven in. Each is like a fresh nail supporting and strengthening the rest ; and all combined together hold too firmly ever to be extracted. **Which are given from one shepherd.** All these words of wisdom, collected in the Book of Proverbs, whatever may have been their human origin, have nevertheless proceeded from one Divine source—from the great Shepherd, who guards, guides, and feeds His people. W. H. G.—That these collected writings are “given by one shepherd,” looks to their common origin in the one revealing Spirit of God. It was as a great and good shepherd, leading His people like a flock into the green pastures of truth, that the Divine Spirit taught holy men of old to speak and write these words of pre-eminent and superhuman wisdom. H. C.

12. No end of making books. The expression is perfectly natural in the mouth of the writer (1 Kings 4 : 32, 33) of three thousand proverbs and a thousand and five songs. Grätz points out that this epilogue assumes the identity of the Preacher with the writer of the Book of Proverbs. W. T. B.—“Many books” were in existence in Solomon’s day. Recent investigations have put beyond doubt that in earlier times Egyptian literature was both comprehensive and unfruitful. According to Diodorus, over the sacred library of Thebes was the inscription, “Pharmacy of the Soul.” We read of wise men in the days of Solomon, with whom he is compared. They lived in the “east country” and in Egypt. Y.

The form of expression in Hebrew is, *To make books, many, without end.* A second subject follows, *and much eagerness of study.* Both of these subjects are now followed by the predicate—viz., *is a weariness of the flesh or body.* Much study would be requisite to make very many books, at least if they were worth reading. And such books as are worth it Coheleth has in view, for they are such as are *goads* and *nails*. M. S.—It is in harmony with the entire strain of this book that Solomon should speak in this verse of his own personal experience as an author. If we may suppose him to have been at this writing far advanced in age, the pertinence of these words to his case becomes the more apparent. If he had in view also the multitude of books other than his, it was quite in place to exhort the reader to spare himself the labor, and not less, the loss, of reading many poor ones, and be content to read, digest, and put in practice the wisdom here laid so briefly before him. H. C.

I know not whether the sight of a great library doth more dismay or comfort me ; it dismays me to think that here is so much that I cannot know ; it comforts me to think that this variety yields so good helps to know what I should. There is no truer word than that of Solomon—there is no end of making many books, this sight verifies it—there is no end ; indeed, it were a pity there should. God hath given to man a busy soul, the agitation whereof cannot but through time and experience work out many hidden truths ; to suppress these would be no other than injurious to mankind, whose mind, like unto so many candles, should be kindled by each other. *Bishop II.*

Books are masters who instruct us without rods or ferules, without words or anger, without bread or money. If you approach them, they are not asleep ; if you seek them, they do not hide ; if you blunder, they do not scold ; if you are ignorant, they do not laugh at you. *Anon.*—Books are the food of youth, the delight of old age ; the ornament of prosperity, the refuge and comfort of adversity ; a delight at home, and no hindrance abroad ; companions by night, in travelling, in the country. *Cicero.*

I have friends whose society is extremely agreeable to me ; they are of all ages and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honors for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them ; for they are always at my service ; I admit them to my company and dismiss them from it whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of past ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits, while others give fortit de to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires and depend wholly on myself. In return for all these services they only ask me to accommodate them with a convenient chamber in some corner of my hurable habitation, where they may repose in peace ; for these friends are more delighted by the tranquillity of retirement than with the tumults of society. *Plutarch.*

God be thanked for books ! they are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are the true levellers. They give to all, who will faithfully use them, the society, the spiritual presence, of the best and greatest of our race. If the sacred writers will enter and take up

their abode under my roof, if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of Paradise, and Shakespeare to open to me the worlds of imagination and the workings of the human heart, and Franklin to enrich me with his practical wisdom, I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship, and I may become a cultivated man, though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live. *Channing.*

With regard to books, we ought not wholly to aim at the pleasantest, but chiefly to respect the wholesomest; not forbidding either, but approving the latter most. *Plutarch.*

You can create for yourself, if you will, by a process of selection, the choicest and most inspiring society. You can summon to your side the world's great teachers—philosophers and poets and prophets; you can commune with those who stimulate thought, with those who stir imagination and feeling, with those who unveil the future and lift the soul to heaven. With your Bible only in your hands, what a goodly company of seers and apostles of God you can call up from the past; and there are other books through which may come to you a similar, though not so great a blessing. *J. Anderson.*

With books, as with companions, it is of more consequence to know which to avoid than which to choose; for good books are as scarce as good companions, and in both instances all that we can learn from bad ones is, that so much time has been worse than thrown away. That writer does the most who gives his reader the *most* knowledge and takes from him the *least* time. That short period of a short existence which is rationally employed is that which alone deserves the name of life; and that portion of our life is most rationally employed which is occupied in enlarging our stock of truth and of wisdom. *Colton.*—Readers are not aware of the fact that their first grand necessity in reading is to be vigilantly, conscientiously *select*; and to know everywhere that books, like human souls, are actually divided into what we may call “sheep and goats”—the latter put inexorably on the left hand of the Judge; and tending, every goat of them, at all moments, whither we know, and much to be avoided and if possible ignored by all sane creatures! *Carlyle.*

Many books require no thought from those who read them, and for a very simple reason; they made no such demand on those who wrote them. Those works therefore are the most valuable that set our thinking faculties in the

fullest operation. For as the solar light in its effect upon vegetation, so with the light that is intellectual; it calls forth and awakens into energy those latent principles of thought in the minds of others, which without this stimulus, reflection would not have matured, nor examination improved, nor action embodied. *Colton.*—As your time for reading will be limited, do not waste it on any reading but such as will go toward informing your mind and improving your taste. Do not read for mere amusement. Do not seek to feed the imagination; that will always extract food for itself out of the sternest studies. Do not read, for the purpose of mere conversation, the popular works of the day, reviews, magazines. The literature of the day is always considered most piquant, the most immediately interesting, but is generally transient; it soon passes away, and leaves no general knowledge, no permanent topic in the mind. And then it is so copious; if one yield his attention to contemporary literature, he is overwhelmed with it. Make yourself, on the other hand, well acquainted with the valuable standard authors, which have stood the test of time; they will always be in fashion; and in becoming intimately acquainted with them, you become intimately acquainted with the principles of knowledge and good taste. *W. Irving.*

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested—that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. *Bacon.*

Books suggest thoughts, thoughts become motives, motives prompt to action. Man is a complicated piece of machinery; hundreds of nerves and muscles must act and react for the slightest turn of the body; yet the very wind of a word, a casual hint or association, can set the whole in motion, and produce an action—actions repeated form habits, and determine the character, fixed, firm and unalterable, for good or for evil. *Pyecroft.*—Every book, every paper, has a soul, breathing a spirit good or bad. It is the soul of its author, and when spread over the pages of the book, that soul acts upon its reader, as truly as when acting directly. The person who touches the book comes in contact with that soul, and is affected by it. And no contact with it is more influential. In reading an author's book you are conversing with him under circumstances very favorable to your becoming like him; for in

the book everything is generally deeply thought out, in shape to convince, or carefully dressed up in a manner to bewitch. And all this only indicates the necessity of reading with care and caution. *Anon.*

Books make life, and books make death. Every book which is read as a good book ought to be read enters into the reader's heart-blood for weal or for woe. Read an evil book, and the stain may remain with you always. Many a man would give all his gold to rid his mind of the false or impure thoughts which his early reading has made abiding guests in his brain. Refuse to soil your mind with a book which is essentially evil, however skilled an artist of words its author may be. There are enough good, pure, strong books in the world to supply all the demands of your intellectual life. Read *these!* . . . Unless it is directed and controlled by religious principle, the intellectual faculty contributes no more to man's chief good than does the digestive faculty. The thing which gives meaning and value to life is the soul's recognition of its relationship to God, and its glad performance of the duties involved in that relationship. Where that relationship is denied, no wealth of intellectual gifts will save the life from being an utter and disastrous failure. In the sublime view of life which Christianity opens up, in the centre which it gives to all thought, provision is made for the deepest and purest intellectual life. Hold fast to this great privilege of so shaping your intellectual life that it may also be a Christian life. Let go no legitimate opportunity to read the best books and to think the best thoughts. Guard for your children, and for those whom God has placed in your care, the same high privilege which you would preserve for yourself. S. S. T.

Many works of fiction may be read with safety, some even with profit; but the constant familiarity, even with such as are not exceptionable in themselves, relaxes the mind, which needs hardening; dissolves the heart, which wants fortifying; stirs the imagination, which wants quieting; irritates the passions, which want calming; and, above all, disinclines and disqualifies for active virtues and for spiritual exercises. Though all these books may not be hurtful, yet the habitual indulgence in such reading is a silent mining mischief. Though there is no act and no moment in which any open assault on the mind is made, yet the constant habit performs the work of a mental atrophy—it produces all the symptoms of decay; and the danger is not less for being more

gradual, and therefore less suspected. *Hannah More.*

Generally speaking, there can be no question that excessive indulgence in novel reading necessarily enervates the mind and diminishes the power of endurance. In other departments of literature, the mental powers are more or less exercised by the ideas which they convey. Facts are stored up in the memory, hints are obtained for the further pursuit of knowledge, judgments are formed respecting character and actions, original thoughts are elicited, a spirit of investigation is excited, and more than all, life is viewed as it really has been, and must be lived. A mind thus furnished and disciplined is provided with a fund of reserved power to fall back upon when assailed by the adverse forces which, in some shape or other, all of us must expect to encounter. In novel reading, on the contrary, the mind passively contemplates the scenes that are brought before it, and which, being chiefly addressed to the passions and emotions, naturally please without the necessity of effort or preparation. There is little or no addition to one's stock of knowledge, no element of mental strength is evolved, and no one is better prepared by it for encountering the stern realities of life. *Dr. Ray.*

It cannot but be injurious that the human mind should never be called into effort. The habit of receiving pleasure without any exertion of thought by the mere excitement of curiosity and sensibility, may be justly ranked among the worst effects of habitual novel reading. Those who confine their reading to such books dwarf their own faculties, and finally reduce their understandings to a deplorable imbecility. Like idle morning visitors, the brisk and breathless periods hurry off in quick and profitless succession, each indeed, for the moment of its stay, prevents the pains of vacancy, while it indulges the love of sloth; but, altogether, they leave the mistress of the house (the soul I mean) flat and exhausted, incapable of attending to its own concerns, and unfitted for the conversation of more rational guests. *Cole-ridge.*

Freely admit from the circulating library the novels of the season, and then be content to find that all residue of zest is gone as to history, or biography, or science, or anything else that is real and genuine, Christianity included. The alternative for the individuals or the family is this: Novel reading, with its consequent *ennui* and utter apathy, or else genuine feeling, employment with zest, as to whatever is real in life, in history, in science, in poetry, and

in general literature. Fiction of any sort in one scale, and reality in the other, the beam will never stand on the level. I. T.—It may be safely assumed that most of the novel reading which people fancy is an intellectual pastime is the emptiest dissipation, hardly more related to thought or the wholesome exercise of the mental faculties than opium eating; in either case the brain is drugged, and left weaker and crazier for the debauch. If this may be called the negative result of the fiction habit, the positive injury that most novels work is by no means so easily to be measured in the case of young men whose character they help so much to form or deform, and the women of all ages whom they keep so much in ignorance of the world they misrepresent. *W. D. Howells.*

That an unnatural and constant excitement of the mind is most injurious, there is no doubt; that excitement involves a consequent weakness, is a law of our nature than which none is surer; that the weakness of mind thus produced is and must be adverse to quiet study and thought, to that reflection which alone is wisdom, is also clear in itself, and proved too largely by experience. And that without reflection there can be no spiritual understanding is at once evident; while without spiritual understanding—that is, without a knowledge and a study of God's will, there can be no spiritual life. Surely, then, it is well to remind you that in reading works of amusement, as in every other lawful pleasure, there is and must be an abiding responsibility in the sight of God; that, like other lawful pleasures, we must beware of excess in it; and not only so, but that if we find it hurtful to us, either because we have used it too freely in times past, or because our nature is too weak to bear it, that then we are bound most solemnly to abstain from it; because, however lawful in itself, or to others who can practise it without injury, whatever is to us an hindrance in the way of our intellectual and moral and spiritual improvement—that is in our case a positive sin. *T. Arnold.*

—I recollect, some years ago, that upon reading some very popular tales (Moral Tales they are styled), the talent of which is exceedingly great, but which are distinguished by the total absence of religion, and the want of all reference to it even in the scenes of death; the influence on my mind was such that, during the time devoted to that reading, it was with great difficulty and perplexity I was able to discharge my ministerial duties. It became, therefore, painfully evident to me, that to be conversant long together with trains of thought or associ-

ations of ideas from which religion is entirely excluded is of most dangerous tendency; for religion is a positive thing, and must be realized by an effort of the mind; it addresses not itself to the senses, does not occur naturally in the paths of life; it lies in an invisible state, and can only be realized by a positive act of faith, and be made operative by a serious exertion of the mental faculties, by calling our attention to spiritual impressions, and thereby overpowering the mechanical and necessary operations of sensible objects. *R. Hall.*

There is a danger to be guarded against, in young persons especially, of an over-indulgence of imagination in reading works of fiction, and in what is called "castle-building." Not that such an exercise of the imagination is to be condemned as an evil in itself, supposing, of course, that we avoid immoral books; but an excess in the perusal of fictions is apt to disqualify any one for real life, by creating a distaste and disgust for actual every-day scenes and humble practical duties, which do not equal in brilliancy the ideal scenes and imaginary transactions of fiction. The heart may even become hardened against real objects of compassion, from our having been too much occupied in dwelling on the elegant and poetical pictures of ideal distress which tales and poems exhibit. For in these, a flaming excitement being all that is aimed at, there is, of course, a studied exclusion of all those homely and sometimes disgusting circumstances which often accompany real distresses, such as we are called upon to sympathize with and to relieve. *Archbishop Whately.*—A person who is moved by high-wrought scenes in novels is necessarily sure to shrink from such scenes in real life, because in the mimic case he had all the excitement without the pain, and he will turn aside from circumstances where excitement cannot be had without pain. And such an one is sure to be found wanting when true feeling is required for use, because the feelings have got the habit of being roused, without leading to exertion. It is plain to me that in this way all such reading is injurious. *F. W. Robertson.*

Every one knows that an artificial excitement of all the kind and tender emotions of our nature may take place through the medium of the imagination. Hence the power of poetry and the drama. But every one must also know that these feelings, however vivid and seemingly pure and salutary they may be, and however nearly they may resemble the genuine workings of the soul, are so far from producing the same softening effect upon the character,

that they tend rather to indurate the heart. Whenever excitements of any kind are regarded distinctly as a source of luxurious pleasure, then, instead of expanding the bosom with beneficent energy, instead of dispelling the sinister purposes of selfishness, instead of shedding the softness and warmth of generous love through the moral system, they become a pressing centre of solitary and unsocial indulgence, and at length displace every emotion that deserves to be called virtuous. No cloak of selfishness is in fact more impenetrable than that which usually envelops a pampered imagination. The reality of woe is the very circumstance that paralyzes sympathy; and the eyes that can pour forth their floods of commiseration for the sorrows of the romance or the drama grudge a tear to the substantial wretchedness of the unhappy. Much more often than not this kind of luxurious sensitiveness to fiction is conjoined with a callousness that enables the subject of it to pass through the affecting occasions of domestic life in immovable apathy; the heart has become, like that of leviathan, "firm as a stone; yea, hard as a piece of the nether millstone." I. T.—Practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated acts, and passive impressions grow weaker by being repeated upon us. Perception of distress in others is a natural excitement passively to pity, and actively to relieve it. Let a man set himself to attend to, inquire out, and relieve distressed persons, and benevolence, considered as a practical principle of action, will strengthen; and he will acquire a greater aptitude actively to assist and befriend them. *Bishop Butler.*

13, 14. *The Preacher's summary conclusion.* First, in a single brief injunction, he declares *the sum of all wise, right teaching, and of wise, right living*—Fear God and keep His commandments. A reverential filial fear, based upon a childlike trust and love, and the spontaneous, glad obedience which flows from the grateful, peaceful sense of Divine forgiveness, Divine renewal, and full adoption; this is the New Testament interpretation of Solomon's concluding injunction. Next, he adds *two grand motives* to this rule of wise, right living. Already, in the body of his sermon, he has referred to the utter insufficiency of life's pleasures and to coming death, as powerful dissuasives to selfish living. Now he concludes with considerations of even greater force, as persuasives to the fear and obedience of God. "For this," he affirms, "is the duty of every man." *This filial fear and childlike obedience* develops all his energies, brings the gratification of every right desire,

and enables him to achieve the largest and best results in this life. In a word, "this is all his business and all his blessedness." The final motive for heeding this injunction is the solemn assertion of a *future judgment*. The language is explicit, and finds its parallel in Rom. 14 : 12 and 2 Cor. 5 : 10. God is the Judge, and Himself organizes the judgment. He *brings* into that judgment every man, and *every work* of the man's whole life, everything secret and hidden from human eye, every purpose of the heart, with every act and influence of the life. Confronting us with this stern and stupendous reality of a personal accounting at the bar of God, alike for the good and for the evil done in the body, this instructive, monitory discourse is abruptly closed. B.

True religion can have no more comprehensive description than in the words, *Fear God and keep His commandments*. This is the duty of every man; and it is enforced by the great doctrine which lies at the basis of this entire book, that there is to be a judgment which will extend to every secret thing, in which our works will be estimated, not according to their outward appearance, but by those inward dispositions and motives which give character to conduct. J. M. M.

13. That filial emotion which here and throughout the Old Testament is often called "fear;" that blended emotion of reverence, trust, and affection can only arise where the spirit of sonship reciprocates God's revealed aspect of compassionate and forthgoing fatherliness. It matters little whether we call the affection fear, or, with the first and great commandment, call it love. In that fear which realizes God's fatherliness there cannot be terror; and in the love which recollects that its father is God there cannot be irreverent boldness. *Hamilton.*—The fear of God turns other fears out of doors; there is no room for them where this great fear is; and being greater than they all, yet disturbs not as they do; yea, it brings as great quiet as they brought trouble. *Leighton.*

The words, "Fear God and keep His commandments," were the simplest of all precepts, and yet one who fixed his heart on them, and strove to live in them, would find himself led perpetually into new regions of truth, new convictions of sin, new forms of holiness. To fear God, not at stated times and in solemn worship only, but evermore; at morning and at noon-day and in the evening; speaking or acting; in secret thoughts and unrevealed desires; not with the false fear of a slave or hireling, but

with the true loving fear of children ; to feel that His commandments are "exceeding broad;" that no man is free from them; that they give freedom, and set a man's heart at liberty—what might not these thoughts teach to the humbled and contrite heart? Would they in the end leave him so far behind? Would there not be growth, from faith to faith, and grace to grace; a perpetual increase of light, shining more and more brightly unto the perfect day? E. H. P.

13. This is the duty of all men. Another and better construction is, *This is for every man, i.e., a law of universal obligation.* What is meant is that this is the only true answer to that quest of the chief good in which the writer had been engaged. This was the "work" of man, that to which he was called by the very fact of his existence. All else was but accessory. E. H. P.

The Hebrew words for "*whole of man*" are used so frequently and so invariably in the sense—*all men*, the whole race of man—that we cannot give them any other sense here. The sentiment therefore must be, *not this comprises all human duty, but this duty is universal.* It binds all human beings. It belongs to man as a creature of God, made intelligent so that he can know God and with such voluntary powers that he *can* give to his Maker the love of his heart and the service of his life in true obedience to His commandments. H. C.

14. In conclusion, he enforces his appeal by the solemn announcement of a judgment, in which God will finally and searchingly test every false and true life; in which every word shall be made manifest, and every secret bared to the gaze of all; in which they that have sown to the flesh (have lived to themselves) and they that have sown to the Spirit (have lived unto God) shall each reap according to the sowing. B.

Knobel argues fairly from the expressions "every work" and "every secret thing" (compare Rom. 2 : 16 ; 1 Cor. 4 : 5) that the Preacher here means an appointed judgment which shall take place in another world, as distinct from that retribution which frequently follows man's actions in the course of this world, and which is too imperfect to be described by these expressions. W. T. B.—No wonder that Knobel here finds a *future* judgment. "If," says he, "one considers this passage without prejudice, he must acknowledge the idea of a formal judgment, occurring, as men suppose, after death." He considers this so plain and certain as a result of the language, that he denies the genuine-

ness of the verse, because, as he says, Coheleth had no knowledge of such a judgment, or belief in it. . . . I see no way of consistency, but that of supposing a future judgment and retribution. The motives to piety without this are inert and powerless. If you say that the prospect of a judgment during the present life is sufficient, we may well ask how that can be, when Coheleth tells us, that "there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous (8 : 14) ; and that all things come alike to all" (9 : 22) ? What retribution is there in all this ? A more inconsistent man than Coheleth, it would be difficult to find, putting all his views side by side, provided he has abjured all *futurity*, and yet insists on retribution to the righteous and the wicked ? M. S.

The precise sense I take to be, God will bring into the final judgment everything done by men, together with every secret thing, whether good or evil ; all the unspoken words, all the unuttered thoughts of the heart—everything whatever that has moral character and therefore comes within the pale of His moral law and government. Comparing the retributive judgments sent of God upon individuals and nations *in time* with that final judgment which is reserved for men at the end of the world and whose awards lie in the eternal state, the former relates for the most part not to secret things, but to patent, open transactions, such as are naturally "known and read of all men ;" while the latter distinctively includes "every secret thing"—the thoughts of the heart, unseen by mortal eye ; the unuttered murmurings ; the rebellious spirit ; the persistent purpose to remain a rebel against God despite of His unceasing love and tenderest calls of mercy. These secret sins cannot wisely be judged and punished of God until they are fully disclosed both to the sinner himself and to the universe as the ground and reason for the infliction of his righteous penalties. The argument is therefore unanswerable which infers that this judgment, since it takes cognizance not only of some secret things, but of "*every secret thing*," must be specially and pre-eminently that final judgment scene at the end of the world of which both our Lord and His apostles spake with the utmost distinctness and solemnity. There is no adequate explanation of the anomalies and irregularities of God's dealings with men as they stand before us in this life, until we take into consideration the grand idea of eternity, the fact of a future eternal life in which retribution will be made equal and righteous, in perfect harmony

with the deeds done in the body, including every secret thing whether good or evil. To the pleasure-loving and pleasure-seeking men of his time before whom his own example had been terribly pernicious, he bears throughout this book a straightforward, strong, and solemn testimony to the vanity of the life they are living ; to the wisdom of accepting with gratitude to God the moderate enjoyments of earthly good which are provided in the simple gratification of the few natural wants of the human system ; and then he exhorts them to hold forever fresh in their mind the thought of a present God, everywhere and always to be feared and obeyed ; whose *will* should be the great study of mortals, accepted as infinite reason, and whose final retribution for all human deeds should perpetually shield men against temptation and bind them to a docile and true-hearted obedience to all the known commands of the great Maker and Father. With surpassing pertinence and force this book closes, leaving the echo of this judgment tramp still resounding in our ear. H. C.

Men have large liberty in the present life, they are free, they enthrone and act out their own choices—God's moral government is a government of law and motive over free minds ; it is reasonable they should be called to an account for this liberty, say what they have done with their freedom—how they chose, how they willed, what they have wrought. On this choosing, willing, and acting their immortality hinges, and before they enter upon their changeless heritage, it is fitting that there should be a summing up and a setting forth of the grounds upon which the eternal issue is declared. So it is nothing arbitrary, but altogether coincident with reason and equity, that men's eyes should be, through all time, turned forward to a great day of trial and award. And this clear announcement of accountability and its issues crowns its reasonableness. Men are forewarned. They will not be taken by surprise. They understand that every day, swift lapsing between its rising and setting sun, is to come up in review. *Stone.*

All of us are on our way, in our one decisive lifetime trial ; and what are we doing with it ? How is it turning ? Some are but a little way advanced in it, and all the fine possibilities of our outfit are still on hand, scarcely if at all abridged. Great is their advantage, greater than if a hundred other stages of probation were promised them. Precious are the gifts,

and precious are the moments as they fly. Act, every one, as if this eventful experiment were now on its way and passing rapidly. Allow no expectation of another to beguile you. Bring in all your powers and centre them on this point of crisis, now so close at hand, knowing that God's friendship cannot be too soon secured. Once for all, remember, once for all. And it is appointed unto men once for all to die, but after that the judgment. H. B.

There is scarcely one human interest, institution, undertaking, of which we can predict the course for twenty-four hours ; but far above all their chances, independent of them all, subject to no chance, no reconsideration, no postponement, is the judgment. So doubtful and ignorant are we about everything in our own personal lives and fortunes, from this hour onward, that we can be said to be perfectly sure of only two events to come : " It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." And " now," says the apostle, " God commandeth all men everywhere to repent ; because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness." *It must be.* And *we* must *appear* there—that is, we must be not only present, but our true characters must be made manifest ; what is here kept hidden must come to light. Faith will stand out boldly. Purity will shine in garments white as the light. Long-abused innocence will get its due. Misunderstood charity and wrongly suspected integrity will come forth out of their cloud in triumph and joy. " Holy and humble men of heart" will be seen for what they are. Deception and concealment will have had their crafty way long enough. Masks will fall off. Disguises will be stripped aside. The cunning sagacity that has covered up the lurking passion, or the cool calculation will lose its self-possession. Whatever wicked thing we have been at most pains to conceal will be written out as with a pen of fire on our foreheads. There will be only one covering for our shame ; and that the robe of the mercy promised to them who believe. F. D. H.

Every man who has secretly injured or defrauded another has had the fraud or the injury inscribed and catalogued for eternity. Every man who has neglected prayer, neglected the Word of God, neglected his own soul, has had the neglect, every instance of it, not only written down in the book of his own conscience and memory, but checked, as it were, in the record of things to be manifested in eternity. Every man, every day, is filling up his character. God keeps a book of character. Every

thought, every act, goes into it ; every attitude of the moral being. *Cheever.*

In the Book of Matthew, where the Judgment Day is depicted for us in the imagery of One seated upon a throne and dividing the sheep from the goats, the test of a man then is not, "How have I believed?" but "How have I loved?" The test of religion, the final test of religion, is not religiousness, but love. Sins of commission in that awful indictment are not even referred to. By what we have not done, by *sins of omission*, we are judged. It could not be otherwise. For the withholding of love is the negation of the Spirit of Christ, the proof that we never knew Him, that for us He lived in vain. It means that He suggested nothing in all our thoughts, that He inspired nothing in all our lives, that we were not once near enough to Him to be seized with the spell of His compassion for the world. *H. Drummond.*

Ecclesiastes was never written to satisfy an Israelite, much less a Christian. It has throughout a tossing of mind and uneasiness of tone ; and though it may be of use in awakening spiritual sensibilities, it cannot meet deep spiritual wants. Solomon cannot give us rest. We must go to the Greater than Solomon, who

does not so much descant on vexation of spirit as preach to us blessedness, and welcome us to salvation and peace. Solomon tells of the vanity under the sun, and we feel his words to be painfully true ; but the Lord Jesus tells us of a good part that shall not be taken away, and which never palls on those who have once learned to value it ; and He raises us in union with Himself above this sphere of earthly things under the sun, and puts us in heavenly places as the heirs of an incorruptible and unfading inheritance. In the bounded sphere of life under the sun men will never go further than remember their Creator, and look for death and judgment, and give some heed to the awfulness of God and His demands on them as creatures. But they who are adopted through Christ, quickened and raised up with Him, know the Father, and have His commandments written on their hearts, and set their mind on things above, not on things on the earth. This is the secret of victory over the world while we dwell in it—"even our faith." This is the rest of the spirit amid ever so many vanities and vexations. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory." *D. F.*

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

INTRODUCTORY.

IN the Hebrew this Book is called the *Song of Songs*; that is, the most beautiful of songs; in the Vulgate it is entitled *Canticum Canticorum*; whence it is frequently termed *Canticles* in English. P. S.

The Jews revered the Song as among the holiest of sacred books. Likening his written works to his noble but less durable fabric of wood and stone, they compared the Proverbs to the outer court of the Temple, Ecclesiastes to the holy place, and the Song of Songs to the holy of holies, the inmost sanctuary of God. A. M. Stuart.

The book bears internal evidence of having been written in his youth and not in his advanced age; in youth his piety seems to have been exemplary and for aught that appears spiritual, judging from his choice of wisdom before all other good, from the zeal with which he devoted himself to the building of the temple, from the striking pertinence, simplicity, and spirituality of his prayer at its dedication; and if he wrote Psalm 72, as is generally supposed, then we have in that Psalm another index of enlarged and just spiritual views of vital truth. This book stands before us with high claims—"The Song of Songs"—the superlative song of the holy Word. The nation already had in hand the song of Moses and Miriam at the Red Sea; the last song of Moses in review of God's paternal care of His chosen through their forty years of wandering; the Song of Deborah over the fall of Israel's foes; and many a song of "the sweet Psalmist of Israel"—with all of which we may suppose this of Solomon to be tacitly compared as the song of all songs, inferior to none, if not eclipsing all. Shall we here assume the point of comparison and standard of value to be only that of poetic embellishment—artistic merit? Must we not assume a broader range of comparison so as to include as

well the excellence of its theme and the high moral worthiness of its aim? This book stands in the sacred canon by indefeasible right, counted in among the sacred books by all the standard authorities; endorsed therefore by Christ and His apostles; and, moreover, attributed to Solomon according to the unanimous consent of all sober critics. Now all other Scripture has a high moral purpose—an obvious aim, worthy of the source whence it came. The very idea of a revelation from God to man involves such an aim and purpose. Consequently, we are not only authorized but bound to look for such an aim in this book. If a choice lies between two constructions, otherwise possible, this consideration legitimately comes in with a strong, perhaps decisive bearing upon our choice. If a figurative construction be admissible and accepted, the book at once develops the noblest theme and the highest moral purpose. The love of God to His chosen redeemed people—a love so pure, so deep, so true, so rich in its fruits of blessing, so fraught with reacting influence toward reciprocal love in return—what can be a more worthy theme for poetry and song? What truth ever revealed from God to man should more command our grateful reception and our profound regard? H. C.

The pious instinct of believers in every age and land, aided by the general analogy of Scripture—an analogy running all the way through from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse—has discerned the figurative meaning of this Song of songs, as it is justly entitled, and has joyfully used it for the purposes for which it was made a part of Divine revelation. The poem turns upon the expression of the strongest passion of our nature, and is marked with Oriental abandon, yet, unlike all other pastorals, Latin, Greek, or Eastern, it nowhere needs to be apolo-

gized for or to have omissions marked with stars. An unseen but irresistible hand warded off the touch of pollution, and kept the emotion which glows like a very flame of Jehovah from overleaping decorum or modesty. No part of the poetical books more required the hand of revision, since in the common version the connection of the paragraphs was not exhibited, and the force of not a few terms was misunderstood. It would be claiming too much to assert that all infelicities have been removed in the revision, but it is certain that a very great improvement has been made. *Chambers.*

The Song of Songs is a graceful and highly finished idyl. No pastoral poetry in the world was ever written so exquisite in its music, so bright in its enjoyment of nature, or presenting so true a picture of faithful love. This is a poem not unworthy to be called "the Song of Songs," as surpassing all others, but it is very different from the poetry of the Psalms. *Perowne.*—The truthfulness of the poem is found in the primeval alliance of love and nature, of love and rural life, which imparts to the warmest of emotions its simplicity and purity, its *healthfulness*, and to the rural taste its animation and vividness of enjoyment. Upon this association human nature was at the first constructed; and toward it will human nature ever be tending. . . . Although the allusions are to rural scenes and the incidents of shepherd-life, there is not a taint of *rusticity*. The persons speak at the impulse of real and passionate emotions; but, in the utterance of these genuine and fond affections, there is always elegance, and there are the ornate habitudes of an advanced Oriental civilization. These love dialogues and fond soliloquies are the loves of the pure in heart. An indication at once of simplicity and refinement, and of purity of temperament in both lovers appears at every turn of this abrupt composition; forever and again is there the commingling of the language of tender fondness with the sense of the beauty and sweetness of nature; the field, the vineyard, the garden, the flowers, the perfumes, the fruits, are not out of sight, from hour to hour, of these pastimes of love. *I. T.*

Whatever may be true as to a secondary meaning, in its primary sense this book treats of love as between the sexes. It has been conceded generally, if not universally, and it must be, that the love here portrayed is connubial, or wedded love. The early Christian fathers sometimes seem to speak of connubial love, even the purest known to mortals, as necessarily involving more or less of original sin. Hence they

denounce unsparingly any construction which finds such love in this song. Our age has advanced too far toward the millennium to endorse such asceticism. In so far as this song commends conjugal fidelity; paints attractively the pure devotion of husband and wife to each other ["my beloved is mine and I am his"]; sets forth the beautiful blending of the love of nature and the charms of rural life with the social endearments of the connubial relation, it has done a noble work for the purity and elevation of our common humanity. *H. C.*

There are difficulties which beset the interpreter of its meaning; but they are not insuperable. The ingenuity of theorists must be put aside; the fanatical prejudices of allegorists must be disregarded; the solid facts of the case must be kept in view, such as the undoubted canonicity of the book and the almost universal feeling of both the Jewish and Christian Churches that there is valuable spiritual truth conveyed in it. Under such conditions it is not impossible to find an intermediate ground on which to stand, on the one side recognizing the distinctly human characteristics of the work, on the other tracing in it the marks of inspiration, so that it shall be retained as a genuine portion of the Word of God.

Authorship and Date.

The title is not decisive, "*The Song of Songs which is Solomon's*;" but the fact that Solomon is not described by any royal title is in favor of the antiquity of the words, and the opinion of critics is almost unanimous that they may be contemporaneous with the book itself. The meaning undoubtedly is, *The song which Solomon composed*, not *The song which celebrates Solomon's love*. When we examine the internal evidence, however, we are left in little doubt that the work is at least of the Solomonic period, and is more likely to have been the production of one whose literary qualities were equal to it than of an author who, while capable of such a masterpiece, still remains unknown. The tendency of recent criticism is to go back to the early view and connect the work with the age of Solomon. *Redford.*

The *diction* of the Song (on the character of which several critics have insisted in arguing for a later date) is unquestionably peculiar. The poem is written in pure Hebrew of the best age, but with a large sprinkle of uncommon idioms and some very remarkable and apparently foreign words. Some of these may possibly have been provincialisms, and attributable, as

Ewald assumes, to the writer's familiarity with the dialect of Northern Palestine. Diction apart, most of the references and allusions in the Song would lead us to assign it, in accordance with its title, to the age of Solomon; nor does there seem sufficient reason for departing from the traditional belief that Solomon was himself the author. The time in which the Song was written was unquestionably one of peace and general prosperity, such as occurred but very rarely in the checkered history of Israel. All the indications concur with this in fixing that time as the age of Solomon. T. L. K.

There are many references in the book which indicate the time of its composition, and which could scarcely be introduced as they are by a writer at a later period. The scene is laid partly in the beautiful northern country and partly in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, and in both cases there is a peaceful prosperity and abundance which corresponds to the age of the great king. The knowledge of national objects of all kinds and of the whole land of Israel befits the royal pen (1 Kings 4 : 23 ; 5 : 13). The familiarity with a great variety of lovely objects and scenes, the reference to the splendor of the royal household, and the poetic beauty of the language throughout make it probable that it was the recollection of the early life of the monarch employed by him at a subsequent time to embody Divine truth. The following are some of the objects introduced names of plants and of animals in thirty-one instances; works of art in ten instances; spices and perfumes, wine of Lebanon, pools of Hebron, forests of Carmel, tents of Kedar, mountains of Gilead, the beauty of Tirzah and Jerusalem, the royal crown, the royal bed of state, the royal bodyguard, the royal espousals, and the connection of the queen-mother with them. While such allusions do not absolutely prove that King Solomon himself was the author, they confirm the likelihood that it dates from his age, and show that it breathed much of his spirit, which was both intensely Jewish and cosmopolitan, dignified and human, profound and poetic. The substance of the book, too, accords with the facts of Solomon's history.

The argument for a later date derived from the language itself is of very little force. It is assumed that Aramaic forms certainly betoken the decay of the Hebrew language. But this is by no means the case. In compositions of a highly poetical and lyrical character such forms are found throughout the Old Testament, as in the Song of Deborah, in Job, and in Amos. The language of the Song generally is much

more like the Hebrew of the Augustan age of the language than of times when its native vigor was in decay, and it was rapidly becoming a dead language. There is no work subsequent to the captivity to be compared with it in literary power, nor can we suppose that all reference to the changes in the national life could have been lacking had it come from a writer of the later times. It is utterly destitute of all philosophical thought, which would certainly have crept into it had it been composed during the Greek period. On the whole, we can scarcely doubt that it is an early work, and the critical authorities which would dispute that conclusion are of no great weight. *Redford.*

[For an effective refutation of arguments in favor of a recent date to the Song, see Speaker's (Bible) Commentary, vol. 4, p. 700. B.]

The Literary Form and Method of the Poem.

Critics have been almost as much divided on the literary questions arising out of this remarkable book as theological writers have been on the interpretation of its meaning. The chief authorities for the unity of the composition are Ewald, Umbreit, Delitzsch, and Zöckler. The following considerations must be acknowledged by every candid reader to be amply sufficient to support the view that the poem is not a mere collection of fragments or isolated songs, but has a definite aim and is the product, at least in arrangement, of some one superintending mind. The name of Solomon, and of "the king," who is plainly Solomon, is prominent in the poem throughout. The different parts seem to be strung together by the introduction of a *chorus* somewhat after the manner of a Greek play; and the lover and his beloved interchange the language of affection in a kind of *dialogue*. The references to *the family of the bride* are consistent throughout. The mother is introduced, never the father, but only the brothers, as though the father were deceased, which would point to a particular history (see 1 : 6 ; 3 : 4 ; 8 : 2). Again, the occurrence again and again of the same or similar words as a *refrain*, and the repetition of similar *illustrations* and *figures*, suggest one mind at work. The bride speaks in much the same language several times. In chaps. 2 : 16 and 6 : 3 she says, "*My beloved is mine, and I am his.*" In chap. 2 : 5 and 5 : 8, "*I am sick with love,*" and over and over again she uses the expression, "*he whom my soul loves.*" She is addressed by the chorus in a similar manner throughout. Delitzsch rightly says, "He who has any perception whatever of

the unity of a work of art in human discourse will receive an impression of external unity from the Song of Solomon which excludes all right to sunder anything from it as of a heterogeneous character or belonging to different periods, and which compels to the conclusion of an internal unity that may still remain an enigma to the Scripture exposition of the present, but must nevertheless exist." *Redford*.

Though the Song is a well-organized poetical whole, its unity is made up of various parts and sections, of which several have so much independence and individuality as to have been not inaptly called idyls, *i.e.*, short poetic pieces of various forms containing each a distinct subject of representation. These shorter pieces are all, however, so closely linked by a common purpose, as to form, when viewed in their right connection, constituent parts of a larger and complete poem. To distinguish these parts, and observe the relation in which they stand to one another and the general subject, is a primary duty of the careful interpreter, who, in making his division, will be guided, partly by observation of poetical structure and sequences of thought, and partly by refrains and recurrent phrases, used it would seem of set purpose by the author of the poem to indicate the commencement or the close of its various sections.

The Song consists entirely of dialogue or monologue, the writer nowhere speaking in his own person; and the dialogue is connected with the development of a certain action. There are, we believe, only three chief speakers, "the bride," "the beloved," and a chorus of "virgins" or "daughters of Jerusalem," having each their own manner and peculiar words and phrases, and these so carefully adhered to as to help us, in some cases of doubt, to determine the particular speaker. It will be found, moreover, that the two halves, or main divisions of the Song have throughout numerous well-balanced contrasts and correspondences; in the one the bride ascends to Jerusalem, and at the king's invitation remains with him there, in the other at her request he returns with her to Shunem; in the one, the beloved seeks and wins the bride, in the other she seeks and obtains her will from him; in the one he claims her self-surrender, in the other she demands his vow of fidelity. In the first half of the Song the chorus sing the praise of the king, in the second they celebrate the beauty of the bride and her triumph over him. Finally, in each of these main divisions the bride relates to her companions a significant dream in order more fully to express her feelings toward the beloved (3 : 1-5 ;

5 : 2-8), and in each she sings at his request a strain of peculiar import which seems to have a special music for his ear (2 : 17 ; 8 : 14). These and other peculiarities, which impart to the Song of Songs its unique and enigmatical character, and have proved a *crux* to the soberest expositors, seem chiefly due to its idealizing treatment of an actual history felt at the time, and especially by the writer, to be profoundly interesting and significant. T. L. K.

The literary problems arising out of the mixed character of the composition seem to be solved in the higher question of its aim and purpose. It is the adaptation of human affection and sentiment to religious uses. We need not, therefore, wait for a satisfactory theory of its literary style, but rather be content to arrange its contents as they dispose themselves by the natural divisions of the subject-matter. It has been observed by Dr. W. Henry Green : "The scenes portrayed and the displays of mutual fondness indulged seem to be grouped rather than linked. They stand forth in their distinctness as exquisitely beautiful, and reflecting as much light on each other and on the subject which they illustrate and adorn as though they had been gathered up into the artificial unity of a consecutive narration or a dramatic plot. And this looser method of arrangement or aggregation, with its abrupt translation and sudden changes of scene, is no less graceful and impressive, while it is more in harmony with the Oriental mind and style of composition generally than the vigorous, external, and formal concatenation which the more logical but less proud Indo-European is prone to demand." All that seems necessary to do as a help to the literary appreciation of the poem is to indicate the general principle and method of its arrangement, which may be expressed thus : Love is first set forth simply in its ecstatic fervor of emotion in the *mutual delight* of the lover and the beloved. It is then celebrated as *nuptial love* in the rejoicing of the bridegroom and the bride. And in the second half of the poem, from chap. 5 : 1 to the end, love is set forth as *tried*, for a time in danger of being lost, ultimately recovered and expanding into *the fulness of joy*. There are thus three parts in the poem. Part I. extends from the beginning to the fifth verse of the third chapter, and may be described as *The Rapture of First Love*. Part II. extends from chap. 3 : 6 to chap. 5 : 1, and may be called *Nuptial Rejoicing*. Part III. extends from chap. 5 : 2 to chap. 8 : 14, and may be named *Separation and Reunion*. But while these main divisions are traceable in the composition, there

are subdivisions which enable us to arrange the whole into a series of lyrical pieces, and to discern in the language some distinction of speakers and some variety of scene and action which give a wonderful life and unity to the poem.

The opening words prepare us for the general scope of the whole work, which is to set forth the theme of *True Love*, and thus to lead our thoughts to the highest ideal of love. "*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy love is better than wine.*" We are prepared for the rapture of first love, which is poured out in the first part in exquisite dialogue and monologue. First, Shulamith, the beloved, is waiting for the arrival of her lover, and surrounded by the chorus of ladies pours out her rapture and longing, which is responded to by her admiring companions (1 : 1-8). Second, the royal lover appears, and the rapturous joy of mutual delight is poured out in the banqueting house (1 : 9-2 : 7), closing with the refrain of serene contentment addressed by the beloved woman to the fair companions of her chamber. "*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken love until it please.*" Third, in the bright, pure atmosphere of this new-found rapture the beloved woman sings the episodes of her love, tells how the loved one wooed her, how the first love mingled with the loveliness of the opening spring and summer and the delights of a pastoral life, how the heart longed for him until he was found, and when it found him would not let him go, concluding with the same refrain of satisfied yearning as in chap. 2 : 7. This third subdivision of Part I. occupies from chap. 2 : 8 to chap. 3 : 5, and contains some of the loveliest poetry in the whole composition.

Part II. *Nuptial Rejoicing* (3 : 6-5 : 1). Here we have first a description of the nuptial festival, and then the bride and bridegroom rejoicing in one another. First, *the litter of Solomon* is seen surrounded with his bodyguard advancing toward Jerusalem. The daughters of Jerusalem go forth to meet him. He is crowned with the splendid crown made by his mother for the day of his espousal. It is but a glimpse of the festival, but it suggests the whole (3 : 6-11). Second, the greater part of the beautiful song which follows (4 : 1-15) is *the address of the bridegroom to the bride*; but *the bride responds* with a brief rhapsody of delight, in which she surrenders herself entirely to her husband (4 : 16): "*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his*

garden and eat his precious fruits;" to which the bridegroom responds with the words of delight and satisfaction (5 : 1). This concludes the first half of the poem. We then pass into another region. The cloud passes over the face of the sun. The brightness of the bridal bliss is obscured for awhile. The bride tells of her forgetfulness and the recovery of her peace. This we may call *Separation and Reunion*—Part III. (5 : 2-8 : 14). The subdivisions of this concluding portion may be distinguished as follows: Under the figure of a dream the bride describes the *temporary separation* of her heart from the bridegroom; her misery; her longing and searching for the beloved object, and her appeal to her fair companions to help her (5 : 2-8). The *sympathizing companions* of the bride draw out the fulness of her love by their questions, asking "why she loves him," and whither he is gone from her? (5 : 9-6 : 3). *The Royal Bridegroom* returns to his bride and rejoices once more in her (6 : 4-9). The companions of the bride, recognizing the effect of the renewed bliss in the appearance of the bride, burst out into a *song of praise of her beauty* (6 : 10). The bride responds with a declaration of her *ecstatic delight* (6 : 11, 12). The companions of the bride pour out their praises as they behold the bride in her *dance of ecstasy* (6 : 13-7 : 5). *The royal bridegroom*, approaching the bride, delights in her attractions (7 : 6-9). The bride, full of satisfaction in the love of her husband, invites him to return with her to *the scenes of her maiden life*, and there his love would beautify all that was familiar to her. In the thought of such bliss she again adjures her companions to acknowledge the perfection of her peace (7 : 10-8 : 4). *Bride and bridegroom* are together in the restful joy of a simple country life, exchanging sweet remembrances and confidences (8 : 5-7). In the peace of the old home others are thought of, and the bliss of the bride overflows upon her *kindred*, to which the royal bridegroom responds and the bride rejoices (8 : 8-12). *The royal bridegroom*, delighting in his bride, bids her sing (8 : 13). The poem ends with the sweet melody of *the bride's voice*, inviting the bridegroom to hasten to her side in one of her familiar love songs: "*Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*" Thus the voice of the bride, which opens the poem, lingers on the ear in its close, and suggests to us that the whole is as if from *her standpoint the aspiration of an ideal love*, breathing itself out in desire after the beloved object—that *the king may delight himself in her beauty*.

Theories of Interpretation.

No one can accept the Song of Solomon as a book of Scripture, the canonical authority of which is undoubted, without forming some theory of interpretation which shall justify the position of such a book among the sacred writings. If the sacred writings are no more than a collection of Jewish literature, in which there would naturally be great variety, and not necessarily in every instance a lofty spiritual aim, then we can regard the Song of Solomon as Herder did, as a collection of beautiful Eastern songs, and there is no need to seek in them either unity of purpose or special significance. But it is simply incredible that such a book, if merely of literary or moral worth, should be introduced into the collection of Jewish Scriptures to be an inexplicable exception to the whole volume. There is no more beautiful book in the Old Testament than the Song of Solomon. We cannot be right in leaving it unstudied and unused. We *must* deal with it as a part of Holy Scripture. As far as possible, therefore, we must put it in intelligible relation to the Word of God, as a progressive revelation of Divine truth. We must understand what is the idea of the book, and how that idea is set forth in the form in which the poem is composed. We proceed, therefore, to give an account of the different theories which have been held as to the interpretation of the book, and so to justify that which we accept.

The theories of interpretation may be classed under three heads. First, those which assume that the work is an *allegory*, that the facts contained in it are merely employed for the purpose of framework, the language being mystical and figurative. Secondly, those which are founded upon a *naturalistic* basis, taking the literary features of the work as the first in importance, and regarding it as some form of *love poem* or collection of *erotic songs*. Thirdly, between these two extremes stands the *typical* view, which, without discarding the historical and literary basis, not to be disputed on the very face of the work, endeavors to justify its position in the Word of God by analogy with other portions of Scripture, in which natural and national facts and interests are imbued with spiritual significance. In each of these points of view there is truth, as there is variety of interpretation. We shall be best prepared to understand the results of the most able modern criticism by placing these different theories clearly side by side.

I. *The Allegorical Theory.* This is much the

most ancient method of interpretation. It is of no consequence to prove that there were any real persons, such as Solomon and Shulamith, whose love for one another is celebrated in this book. It might be so or it might not be so; these things are an allegory. The deepest truths are set forth in the dress of these words of human affection. Some have found in them *God and His Church* throughout all time. Others the *historical and political relations* of the Jewish people. Others have sought in them profound *philosophical mysteries* and *cabalistic secrets*. There is one point, and one alone, in which all these allegorical interpreters agree, and that is, that nothing is to be made of the book taken literally, that there is no consistency and order in it if we attempt to regard it historically; therefore we have nothing in it but words, which may be applied in any manner which is spiritually or otherwise profitable. Such a view condemns itself, for it deprives us of any ground of confidence in seeking the true interpretation. That surely must be the mind of the Spirit which best accords with the facts of the case. If there is not a foundation of historical truth underlying all the Scripture, then it is a mere unsubstantial cloud which may be blown away by the changes in the atmosphere of human opinion. It is against the analogy of Scripture. It opens the way to extravagance and folly, by removing all bounds and inviting the license of mere individual speculation. It repels the common sense of the ordinary reader of Scripture, and simply shuts the book which it misinterprets, so that many refuse to look into it at all. "This mode of expounding each separate particular, not with a view to its place in the description in which it stands, but as a distinct reference to the spiritual object typified by it, necessarily leads both to a serious distortion of the lessons to be conveyed, and to a marring and mangling of the symmetry and beauty of the objects depicted." The rise of the allegorical method can be traced chiefly to the Alexandrian school, and to its great representative, Origen. It was the fruit of philosophy in union with Christianity. Origen wrote two homilies on the Song of Solomon, which were translated by Jerome, and a commentary, part of which still remains in the Latin of Rufinus. The idea of the book, according to Origen, is the longing of the soul after God, and the sanctifying and elevating influence of Divine love; but he varies in his explanation of the allegory, now taking it of the individual and then of the Church. His example was followed by later Christian writers, as by Eusebius, Athanasius, Epiphanius, Cyril,

Macarius, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Theodoret, Augustine, and Chrysostom. There were slight differences among these early Fathers in their application of the method, but they all adopted it. In the time of the reformers, when biblical study received an entirely new impulse and direction, we find the allegorical method, while not altogether discarded, somewhat modified by the historical and critical spirit which was growing in the Church. In the middle ages we meet with larger and fuller commentaries, in which the allegorical method is wrought out with great ingenuity. Until we come to the time of Keil and Hengstenberg we have no really sensible defence of the theory, and it is scarcely necessary to make the remark that *their* defence is a virtual surrender, for their use of the *allegorical* method is so moderate that it barely exceeds the *ideal* and *typical* view, and is substantially the same as that of Delitzsch and Zöckler. Keil says: "The book depicts in dramatico-lyrical, responsive songs, under the allegory of the bridal love of Solomon and Shulamith, the loving communion between the Lord and His Church, according to its ideal nature as it results from the choice of Israel to be the Church of the Lord. According to this, every disturbance of that fellowship springing out of Israel's infidelity leads to an ever firmer establishment of the covenant of love, by means of Israel's return to the true covenant God, and this God's unchangeable love. Yet we are not to trace in the poem the historical course of the covenant-relation, as if a veil of allegory had been thrown over the principal critical events in the theocratic history." Hengstenberg argues for the allegorical view from the use of similar erotic language in the Psalms and prophets, as well as in the general tone of the Old Testament. The beloved of the heavenly Solomon is the daughter of Zion; the whole, therefore, must be explained of Messiah and His Church. But he proceeds to attempt an application of this view to the details of the language, in which he shows that it can only be accepted in a modified form. The only other names which require mention in connection with the allegorical theory are those of Thrupp, Wordsworth, and Stowe. The fault of all these writers, able and learned as they are, is that they push their theory too far, and that they are led away by it into a misuse of Scripture to support that which does not fairly rest upon it.

But while the allegorical method, *as a formal treatment*, may be erroneous, it recognizes the spiritual meaning and value of the book. The

allegorist is certainly right in demanding that a distinct religious purpose shall be the *vital centre* of any system of interpretation put forth. As Isaac Taylor has remarked in his *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, "the book has given animation, and depth, and intensity, and warrant, too, to the devout meditations of thousands of the most devout and of the purest minds. Those who have no consciousness of this kind, and whose feelings and notions are all 'of the earth earthy,' will not fail to find in this instance that which suits them, for purposes, sometimes of mockery, sometimes of luxury, sometimes of disbelief. Quite unconscious of these possessions, and happily ignorant of them, and unable to suppose them possible, there have been multitudes of earthly spirits to whom this, the most beautiful of pastorals, has been, not indeed a beautiful pastoral, but the choicest of those words of truth which are 'sweeter than honey to the taste,' and 'rather to be chosen than thousands of gold and silver.'"

II. We proceed to describe the theories of interpretation which have been based upon a *naturalistic principle*. These may be styled *The Erotic*, as they all regard the work as a *collection of erotic songs*, put together simply on the ground of their literary worth and poetic arrangement, religiously used by being idealized, just as the language of secular poetry may be sometimes mingled with sacred, though the original intention of the words had no such application. There are several varieties in the form of this erotic theory. The songs have been regarded by some as separate *Idyls of Love*, collected together and formed into a poem only by a predominating reference to Solomon, and by the one pervading spirit of pure love. But others have attempted to trace a *dramatic unity and progress* in the whole, and have elaborated a *history* on which to found the drama, while those who have renounced all such attempts to find a drama in Hebrew poetry have yet clung to the idea of an *epithalamium*, composed on the occasion of Solomon's marriage, either with the Egyptian princess or some Israelitish bride, and have endeavored to justify their view by the literary form of the poem. It is not necessary entirely to reject *the naturalistic basis* in order to find a reason for the position of Solomon's Song in the Bible. There is an element of truth in all the erotic theories. They help us to remember that *human love* is capable of being mingled with *Divine ideas*. That which is so often impure, and which sinks the life of man below that of the beasts that perish, may yet be sanctified, lifted above the evil of a fallen nature, and so

may be taken, ideally, as the fitting vehicle by which to convey the Spirit of God to the spirit of man. Herder wrote a separate work on Solomon's Song, treating it as a collection of songs of love, and as intended to describe *ideal human love*, for the purpose of setting forth the example of purity and innocence when it was most needed in the ancient world. His criticism is in many respects valuable and highly æsthetic. He draws attention to the exquisite poetry of the songs, and to their surpassing worth as an ideal of human sentiment. But delightful reading as Herder's work undoubtedly is, it is yet but little help to the biblical student, as there is no attempt to follow out the religious intimations of the language, or to find in it any parabolical intention. The rationalistic critics have, most of them, regarded the songs as *fragmentary* and isolated, and thus have deprived themselves of their true position as commentators; for if there be no *unity* in the book, it is hard to find any basis on which to rest the explanation of its meaning as a whole. To suppose a sacred work written simply in praise of human feeling, or even to cherish the ideal of human relationship, is to resist the analogy of Scripture. It may be doubted if even the Proverbs of Solomon should be regarded from so wide and general a point of view as that. There is a little advance upon the barren, dreary emptiness of this rationalistic criticism in what is called the dramatic theory of interpretation, which has received a considerable accession of interest during the present century by the development of a new historical hypothesis by which it is attempted to explain the dramatic unity and progress of the composition. Jacobi in 1771 led the way, in a work in which he professed to defend the Song of Solomon from the reproaches brought against it, supposing Solomon to have fallen in love with a young married woman, who, with the husband, is brought to Jerusalem. The husband is induced to divorce his wife for Solomon's sake, and she is alarmed at the king's approach, and cries out for her husband's help. The whole is a worthless attempt to work out a baseless hypothesis, which is entirely out of harmony with the pure spirit of the whole book. Other German critics have followed Jacobi in endeavoring to unfold the dramatic unity of the poem, but none have gone further than the great historian, Ewald, who has translated it with an introduction and critical remarks (1826) (see also his work on *The Poets of the Old Testament*—1866). His view, as set forth in the latter work, is that it was actually prepared for representation. This opinion is supported by the hypoth-

esis that there is an actual love history at the basis of the poem; a young shepherd, of the north of Palestine, being the real lover of Shulamith, from whom Solomon desires to alienate her affection; and that the main idea of the book is the successful resistance of Shulamith to the allurements of the royal lover and her faithfulness to her first love, to whom she is restored by the king in acknowledgment of her virtue and as an act of homage to faithful affection. This theory has been adopted by many critics in later times, as by Hitzig, Vaihinger, Renan, Reville, and Ginsburg; but it is not only exceedingly improbable in itself, but out of harmony with the place of the work in the canon of Scripture. Even if we could suppose Solomon capable of writing such a history of his own delinquencies, we could still less understand how such a "confession" should be incorporated in the sacred volume. There may be expressions in the mouth of the bride which seem at first sight to favor such a theory, but the position of Solomon throughout is quite inconsistent with the idea of illicit solicitation, or indeed with any other relation to Shulamith than that of chaste and legal marriage. The only forcible argument in favor of this view, which is generally called "*the shepherd*" theory, is the use of language in reference to the bridegroom which supposes him a shepherd; but this is explained by the fact which lies on the surface of the poem, that the bride is one brought up in country life, and who in the purity and simplicity of her heart addresses even Solomon himself as her shepherd. The conclusion of the poem bears this out, for Solomon is so captivated by the beauty of her character that he follows her to her native region and rural home, where he is surrounded by her relations, to whom he vouchsafes his royal favor. It must not be overlooked, that by this highly artistic method not only is the contrast between the royal splendor and the pastoral simplicity heightened, but ample scope is given for the introduction of spiritual analogies which must be granted to be the main purpose of the book and the justification of its place in the canon. The theory is seen in all its improbability in the form which is given it by Renan, who represents the shepherd following his beloved one to the foot of the tower of the seraglio where she is confined, being admitted secretly by her, and then exclaiming, in the presence of the chorus, in a state of rapturous delight: "*I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse,*" etc. (5 : 1), carrying her home when she is at last released from the king's harem, asleep in his arms, and laying

her under an apple-tree when she awakes to call upon her lover to set her as a seal upon his arm, etc. The shepherd hypothesis is also defective in another respect, and that is, that it fails to give a clear explanation of the two dreams which Shulamith narrates, which certainly must both refer to the same object of love, and would seem to imply that there was some defect of love on her part. The spiritual interpretation is perfectly simple and plain; the bride representing the soul of man, and therefore its inferiority to that with which it would be united. But if we suppose Shulamith shut up in a harem, the representation is most forced and unnatural, for she certainly could not have either wandered by night in the city of Jerusalem, nor dreamed of such an adventure. The whole hypothesis is rendered unnecessary by the arrangement which disposes the language among three classes of speakers only, the bride, the chorus of ladies, and the king. Thus the shepherd lover is identified with the royal bridegroom, and the basis is still left secure on which a spiritual interpretation of the whole can be based. Notwithstanding the very ingenious attempts made by Ginsburg and Reville to defend the theory, it must be given up, with all the erotic explanations, as untenable and lowering to the character of the poem. *Redford.*

“The hypothesis” so called “of the shepherd-lover,” though favored by a majority of modern interpreters, and worked out by some with great ingenuity, necessitates the introduction of many forced expositions and of thoughts and sentiments alien from the purity and sweetness of the whole composition. This hypothesis assumes that there are two lovers in the Song, one a faithful, simple-minded shepherd, the other a magnificent, voluptuous king, by each of whom the affections of a Shulamite maiden are alternately solicited, while she, faithful in her allegiance to her shepherd-lover, rejects with scorn the monarch’s blandishments, and finally compels him to abandon his pursuit. There is, we are persuaded, but one lover in the Song, and one object of his affection, without rival or disturbing influence on either side. The beloved of the bride is in truth a king, and if she occasionally speaks of him as a shepherd, she intimates herself (6 : 2, 3) that she is speaking figuratively. It is, moreover, quite in accordance with her character, as consistently delineated throughout the poem, that being herself a rustic maiden of at least comparatively lowly station she should, by such an appellation, seek to draw down him “whom her soul loveth” (1 : 7 ; 3 : 1-4), though he be the King of Israel, within the

narrower circle of thoughts and aspirations, in which she is herself accustomed to move. And, therefore, while the whole poem breathes of almost more than regal splendor and magnificence the bride is nowhere represented as dwelling with any pride or satisfaction on the riches or grandeur of her beloved, but only on what he is to her in his own person as “chief among ten thousand and altogether desirable,” thus exhibiting that characteristic of womanly affection which Cornelius à Lapide attributes to her in words erroneously ascribed by him to Augustine : “Love heedless of dignity is devoid also of fear. The loving soul, upborne by her aspirations and drawn by her desires, closes her eyes to majesty, but opens them to delight.”

We must venture to say of the theory itself (which with various shades of interpretation a crowd of modern critics are agreed in maintaining), that the more we examine it in detail, the more thoroughly unsound it appears to be in its main positions. The readiest way to its refutation might perhaps be found in a careful critical discussion and comparison of the numerous and often mutually destructive forms which this one hypothesis has been made to assume in the hands of even its most able advocates. T. L. K.

The piece can only be put into this shape by arbitrary transpositions, and the most enormous drafts upon the imagination. The chronological order of action is almost inverted. In the first chapter the girl is supposed to enter the seraglio of Solomon, but it is only in the third chapter that she comes to Jerusalem for the first time; while in the sixth chapter she is carried away finally by the chariots of Solomon; and the eighth chapter obstinately refuses to fit into the frame at all. Indeed, M. Renan himself seems to admit that he can make nothing of the whole passage from chaps. 6 : 11 to 7 : 12. *Bishop W. Alexander.*

The very power of the breath of inspiration which fills the pages of this book, so unique in its kind, might suffice to make it clear that its meaning could not be limited to the mere love-story which forms its plot. How can we fail to see that the splendor of an ideal of a higher nature illumines all these figures, and crowns them with a heavenly glory? Hence the incomparable force of the poetic inspiration of the Canticle. The mystical interpretation has erred, no doubt, in giving no historical basis to its composition; but the grossly realistic explanations of the modern school err no less certainly in not recognizing in the situation and in the historical personages symbols of the sublime theocratic ideas, the contemplation of which in-

spires the mind of the author, and gives to his work that superior brilliancy which distinguishes it from all merely erotic productions. Here, as well as in the Book of Job, the real drama with which the author's mind is filled, is that which is acted behind the curtain; it is left for the reader to guess it. *Godet*.

III. *The Typical View*. It should be frankly admitted by those who reject both the allegorical and the erotic interpretation of the Song of Solomon, that no theory can be sound which does not recognize what forms the principal distinctive element in each of these views. We cannot overlook the fact that the book is a religious book, and is placed as such in the canon; therefore in some sense and to some extent it must be allegorical; that is, there must be a deeper meaning in it than that which appears on the surface, and that meaning must be in harmony with the rest of Scripture. So with regard to the various erotic and naturalistic explanations, it cannot be denied that there is a historical basis on which the whole rests, so that as poetry there is an ideal human element running through it which gives it both vitality and form. It is the attempt to carry it out to an extreme which has vitiated the theory in each case. The main principle can be preserved without acceptance of the details. It is true, as Zöckler has observed, that it was "the greatly preponderating inclination of the Fathers in the middle ages, which soon obtained exclusive sway, to plunge immediately and at once into the spiritual sense, which stifled at its birth every attempt to assert at the same time a historical sense, and branded it with the same anathema as the profane-erotic interpretation of Theodore of Mopsuestia." But the spirit of the Reformation broke the spell of the allegorists. The desire to know the mind of the Spirit led to a truer searching of the Scriptures. The two great English names in connection with a revival of the study of the book on a more intelligent foundation are John Lightfoot (1684) and Bishop Lowth (1753). The latter, especially in his *Prelections in Hebrew Poetry*, somewhat after the style of Herder, led the way in this country to a profounder attention to the literary form and critical examination of the Bible. Lowth's view is substantially that which has been adopted by the majority of evangelical writers since his time, that the book is not to be regarded as a "continual metaphor" nor as a "parable properly so called," but rather as a "mystical allegory in which a higher sense is superinduced upon a historical verity." The two great German commentators, Keil and

Delitzsch, substantially agree in their view, which, while admitting the allegorical *intent* of the book, refuses to see hidden meanings in every detail of the historical basis. One would find, more distinctly than the other, reference to the Church of Christ, both in Israel and in the new dispensation, but both agree that the love of Solomon for his bride is idealized, and so used spiritually. Keil sums up his view thus: "It depicts in dramatized lyrical expression songs under the allegory of the bridal love of Solomon and Shulamith, the loving communion between the Lord and His Church, according to its ideal nature as it results from the choice of Israel to be the Church of the Lord. According to this, every disturbance of that fellowship, springing out of Israel's infidelity, leads to an even firmer establishment of the covenant of love, by means of Israel's return to the true covenant God, and this God's unchangeable love. Yet we are not to trace in the poem the historical course of the covenant relation, as if a veil of allegory had been thrown over the principal events in the theocratic history." The Rev. T. L. Kingsbury, in the *Speaker's Commentary*, has accepted the suggestion which seems the most natural, that the history which is involved in the Song is genuine, and that it refers to "some shepherd maiden of Northern Palestine by whose beauty and nobility of soul the great king has been captivated; that as the work of one endued by inspiration with that wisdom which 'overseeth all things' (Wis. 8 : 23), and so contemplates them from the highest point of view, it is in its essential character an ideal representation of human love in the relation of marriage; that which is universal and common in its operation to all mankind being here set forth in one grand typical instance." "No allegorical method of exposition," he rightly observes, "which declines attempting to elucidate an independent literal sense, on the plea that such endeavor would involve the interpretation in a succession of improprieties and contradictions," should be accepted. It is both "untrue and dishonoring to a sacred and canonical book." The fundamental idea he would take to be, "the awful, all-constraining, the at once levelling and elevating power of the mightiest and most universal of human affections; and the two axes on which the main action of the poem revolves are the twofold invitation, the king's invitation to the bride on bringing her to Jerusalem (4 : 8), the bride's to the king in recalling him to Shunem (7 : 11); in these two invitations and their immediate consequences—the willing obedience of the bride and the ready condescension

of the king, the first surrender on her part and the final vow on his—the writer of the Song seems to have intended to exhibit the twofold energy, both for elevation and abasement, of that affection, to the delineation of which his work is dedicated.”

While we willingly coincide in the general truth of these remarks, we incline to the view which Keil has expressed so moderately, that the main purpose of the book is not to glorify a human sentiment or relationship, which seems out of place in a Hebrew book, but rather using the ideal human feeling and relationship to lead the soul of man into the thought of its fellowship with God, the condescending privilege which is included in that fellowship, the exaltation of man which it brings with it, and the mutual character of religion, both in the individual and in the Church, as based upon the mystical union of God and His creature and their interchange of communications. We must not be deterred from a moderate and chastened employment of type in the interpretation of Scripture by the abuse which has been only too frequently made of it. No doubt, if we look above the historical or natural or literary aspects of the book, it is easy to find in it the meanings which we may be tempted to put there, but the same thing may be said of the Lord's parables and of all Scripture. The historical, literary, and spiritual aspects blend in one, and that interpretation which is given to the language is most likely to be after the mind of the Spirit which follows His own method and harmonizes with that which He inspired the man of God to set before us, and His Church to hand down to us with the seal of its approbation upon it. The commentary must always justify, or otherwise, its own main principle; and if as a whole it satisfies the language, it cannot be very far astray. It has been objected by some that we ought not to employ Solomon as in any sense a type of God or of Christ, because he was a sensual man; but such a principle would simply exclude all types, for they must be inferior in worth to that which they typify. The patriarchs were far from perfect men in their moral features, but they were plainly employed in Scripture typically as well as historically. David himself, the leading typical character and norm of the Old Testament, was guilty of great sins. Moreover, while Solomon appears in the poem itself as a sensual Eastern monarch, there is no reference to the sensuality of his life. Nor need we doubt that sensualist as he became, and degraded as he was in the latter part of his

life, he would in the earlier portion of his manhood be capable of the sincere attachment portrayed in the Song. At the same time it may be allowed that the facts are idealized. Fundamentally they are historical. For a religious purpose they are lifted up into the region of poetry. To a considerable extent the same may be said of the Book of Job, which builds a splendid poem on a basis of facts. There remains, then, only in conclusion to justify this typical interpretation by showing that it is in analogy with other parts of Scripture. It will not be denied by any one, however much opposed to allegory or type, that the metaphor of marriage is common through the Old Testament in connection with the exhortation to covenant faithfulness. The fifth, fiftieth, and sixty-second chapters of Isaiah and the first few chapters of Hosea, with the opening words of Malachi, will suffice to remind the reader that it was an illustration which all the sacred writers made use of. It should again be remembered that we have in the forty-fifth Psalm an instance of what the title describes as a “*Song of Loves*” or *Epithalamium*, which no one doubts was composed on the occasion of Solomon's marriage, or on some similar occasion in Israel. It is only a very extreme rejection of typical interpretation which would refuse to such a Psalm any higher application than that which appears upon the surface, especially with such language in it as v. 6: “*Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre.*” Admitting that such terms might be at first employed only as royal adulation and homage, it can scarcely be doubted that their place in the Word of God is due to the fact that the Israelitish king was regarded as the type of Him who was called by the believing Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile, “*the Son of God, the King of Israel*” (John 1:49). The reference to Messiah was certainly believed by the Jews themselves, as we see from the introduction of it into the Chaldee paraphrase and others of the Jewish writings, and as such it is cited in Hebrews (1:8, 9). No satisfactory explanation of the Psalm can be made out on any other view. It must be admitted, too, that the use of metaphors formed from the marriage relation and from the language of human affection, in application to the highest intercourse of the soul with the objects of faith, is common both in our Lord's discourses and in the writings of the apostles. It is especially prominent in the Apocalypse. The Church is the bride, the Lamb's wife. Would such metaphors be employed by the Apostle John unless he had

found them already in the Old Testament? Would the Apostle Paul have spoken as he does of the mystical meaning of marriage as setting forth the union between Christ and His Church, unless the Scriptures had familiarized the people of God with the symbol? We entirely sympathize with that revulsion of feeling with which healthy minds turn away from the extravagant fancifulness and arbitrariness of the allegorical school of commentators. But we refuse to follow those who, in their avoidance of one extreme, fly to the other. The book cannot be a mere literary product. We must find for it some true place in the sacred volume. "Shall we then," asks Mr. Kingsbury in the *Speaker's Commentary*, "regard it as a mere fancy, which for so many ages past has been wont to find in the pictures and melodies of the Song of Songs types and echoes of the actings and emotions of the highest love, of love Divine, in its relations to humanity; which, if dimly discerned through their aid by the synagogue, have been amply revealed in the Gospel to the Church? Shall we not still claim to trace, in the noble and gentle history thus presented, foreshadowings of the infinite condescensions of incarnate love?—that love which, first stooping in human form to visit us in our low estate in order to seek out and win its object, and then raising along with itself a sanctified humanity to the heavenly places (Eph. 2 : 6), is finally awaiting there an invitation from the mystic bride to return to earth once more and seal the union for eternity (Rev. 22 : 17)? With such a conception of the character and purpose of the poem, we may at any rate sympathize with the glowing language of Bernard concerning it. 'This Song excels all other songs of the Old Testament. They being, for the most part, songs of deliverance from captivity, Solomon for such had no occasion. In the height of glory, singular in wisdom, abounding in riches, secure in peace, he here by Divine inspiration sings the praises of Christ and His Church, the grace of holy love, the mysteries of the eternal marriage, yet all the while like Moses putting a veil before his face, because at that time there were few or none that could gaze upon such glories.' " It is unworthy of any devout interpreter of such a book to despise and disparage the spiritual element in it. What so many of God's people have recognized must be substantially the mind of the Spirit. *Redford*.

The typical interpretation seems safest and best. It admits a literal basis for the Song, while it refuses to be content with a literal sense. It assigns to the book a full spiritual

significance, but saves it from fantastic or eccentric meanings. There is an earthly theme—the love of Solomon and Shulamith. The Song celebrates a pure affection, and a wedded bliss. But it has, at the same time, a deeper meaning and a loftier aim, well entitling the poem to its place in Holy Scripture. Typically it suggests and depicts the love, sacred and intense, which unites the Lord Himself to the people, who form, in inspired language, His "Bride." Solomon is here—and then, typically, the Greater than Solomon. A beautiful bride is here—and then, typically, Israel, and also the Church, adorned as a bride for her husband. D. F.

The great central idea is that the relation of God to His people in covenant with Himself is analogous to the well-known marriage relation in human society. The bride is not precisely the individual Christian, but the Church as a whole. It seems to me the part of wisdom to give scope to this fact so far forth as to guard us against abuses, but *not so far* as to rob the book of its precious applications to the heart and life of the individual Christian. For it must be true that in loving the Church, God loves the individual Christian souls that compose it. We learn from this Song that the love between God and His people should be *reciprocal*. In the marriage covenant each party professes and binds itself to love the other. A sense of love received should prompt to responsive love in return. So a sense of God's love to us should quicken and intensify our love to Him. In all true marriage it is assumed that this mutual love of the parties is and should be exceedingly strong. One of the first lessons taught us in this Song is the *strength* of the love which God bears toward His people. The figure seized upon as the basis of this allegory indicates and signifies the deepest, strongest love known to human souls. The loving man and the loving woman are happy to leave father and mother, brother and sister, and be no longer twain, but *one*. Human bosoms can witness to no love more deep, more pure, more self-sacrificing than this. This is a simple fact of human experience which it were quite gratuitous to attempt to prove. The proof is in the hearts of those who have experienced its presence and its power. Now when God takes up this well-known human affection as He does often in His Word, and as I believe in this Song, and affirms it of Himself toward His people, he testifies most explicitly and forcibly to the deep, intense, absorbing love of His heart toward His people. Then let a sense of this great love toward us quicken and

call forth a like deep, intense, and all-absorbing love from our hearts toward Him. And as, in the relation of husband and wife, little services, perpetually recurring, are the life of love, so the perpetual cares and services of our great Maker and Husband toward His people, and in truth toward every individual soul, should hold us to perpetual service for Him—a service done in love, done as the spontaneous expression of our love for Him—a service that our love should be too strong to suffer us ever to neglect. How should the reciprocity of this loving service on our part toward God be assiduously cherished ! It is beautiful as between husband and wife ; as between our Divine Lord and His affianced people, it is glorious. How full of joy does the most laborious and self-sacrificing service toward God become when done in love, responsive to the love that glows in all the service he does for us ! And finally, as our Divine Father has seen fit to set forth His love for His people and His claims upon their love under this most precious relation, so fraught with suggestive analogies, so richly instructive, and withal, so intensely quickening and inspiring, let us guard most sedulously against abusing it ; let us shut off sternly every unhallowed association which may steal upon us from the peculiar form of these representations, that so, holding our minds to their manifest intent, we may bring home to our heart all the gloriously impulsive, quickening, heavenly inspirations to love and duty which it may and should impart. H. C.

There is a state of mind and feeling which enables men to appropriate to themselves strong spiritual nutriment from such writings as these, seizing with a sharply apprehensive sense the spiritual which is set forth to them under carnal symbols, that the carnal is lost sight of and forgotten under the spiritual. This faculty is very strong among the Orientals ; in fact, this mode of expression is at the present day so familiar in the East that an Oriental, on first becoming acquainted with this book, would read it with rapture, and recognize it as full of edifying spiritual expression, the general purport of which he would be at no loss to gather. That this faculty is not entirely wanting to the Occidentals has been evinced by the relish with which men of eminent holiness and spiritual feeling have extracted refreshment to their souls from the Song of Songs. *Kitto.*

We find the Canticles to have been the favorite book of Bernard, who poured out the hoarded tenderness and experience of his soul

in those eighty-six sermons to the brethren at Clairvaux. But it was as dear to Leighton, to Taylor, and to Bunyan, as to Bernard and Catherine of Sienna. *Bishop Alexander.*—Jonathan Edwards, although the driest and most astute of scholastic theologians, had a heart and imagination of Oriental richness and fervor. In the account which he gives of his religious experience, he says : “The whole Book of Canticles used to be pleasant to me, and I used to be much in reading it about that time, and found from time to time an increased sweetness, that would carry me away in my contemplations. This I know not how to express otherwise than by a calm, delightful abstraction of the soul from all the concerns of the world ; and sometimes a kind of vision, or fixed ideas and imaginations—of being alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, sweetly conversing with Christ, and rapt and swallowed up in God. The sense I had of Divine things often would, of a sudden, kindle up an ardor in my soul that I knew not how to express. . . . While thus engaged, it seemed natural to me to sing and chant forth my meditations ; or to speak my thoughts in solitude with a singing voice.” The soft, rich, glowing, all-absorbing devotional feeling of Jonathan Edwards would soon cure people of all their scruples in respect to the Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s. *Stowe.*

There are many sweet lessons and suggestions of the mind of Christ and the love of saints to be gathered from a minute study of this book ; and some preachers, like M’Cheyne and Krummacher, have turned select passages to excellent homiletic use ; but great caution is to be observed lest a cold, unimaginative mind, on the one hand, should so dissect this glowing Oriental poetry as to destroy its living beauty—nay, should even force upon it an indelicacy from which the original is innocently free ; and, on the other hand, lest an over-active fancy should, by insisting on a separate spiritual meaning for every figure of speech, every allusion to natural objects, and every turn of expression in poetical descriptions of the human form, weaken the force and mar by very extravagance the general impression of the Song. So have the types in the Books of Moses been often injured by fantastic interpretation, and the Parables of Christ overstrained by the pressing of spiritual analogies into every detail. The charm of this Song to every Christian heart is its constant suggestion and eulogy of Christ.

The type Solomon is quite forgotten in the Pre-eminent Antitype. Christ is the winner of souls ; His name is fragrant ; His love passes knowledge ; His person is sacred, head and foot being seen as of fine gold ; His strength is as "pillars of marble ;" His "mouth is most swcet," full of gracious words, and breathing on us the Holy Ghost. " Yea, He is altogether lovely." All who really know Him love Him ; and the more they know Him the more they must love Him, and following Him, depart from all iniquity. D. F.

CHAPTER I.

- 1 THE Song of songs, which is Solomon's.
- 2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth :
For thy love is better than wine.
- 3 Thine ointments have a goodly fragrance ;
Thy name is *as* ointment poured forth ;
Therefore do the virgins love thee.
- 4 Draw me ; we will run after thee :
The king hath brought me into his chambers :
We will be glad and rejoice in thee,
We will make mention of thy love more than of wine :
Rightly do they love thee.
- 5 I am black, but comely,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
As the tents of Kedar,
As the curtains of Solomon.
- 6 Look not upon me, because I am swarthy,
Because the sun hath scorched me.
My mother's sons were incensed against me,
They made me keeper of the vineyards ;
But mine own vineyard have I not kept.
- 7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,
Where thou feedest *thy* flock, where thou makest *it* to rest at noon :
For why should I be as one that is veiled
Beside the flocks of thy companions ?

- 8 If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,
Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,
And feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.
- 9 I have compared thee, O my love,
To a steed in Pharaoh's chariots.
- 10 Thy cheeks are comely with plaits *of* hair,
Thy neck with strings of jewels.
- 11 We will make thee plaits of gold
With studs of silver.
- 12 While the king sat at his table,
My spikenard sent forth its fragrance.
- 13 My beloved is unto me *as* a bundle of myrrh,
That lieth betwixt my breasts.
- 14 My beloved is unto me *as* a cluster of henna-flowers
In the vineyards of En-gedi.
- 15 Behold, thou art fair, my love ; behold, thou art fair ;
Thine eyes are *as* doves.
- 16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant :
Also our couch is green.
- 17 The beams of our house are cedars,
And our rafters are firs.

1. THIS is certainly the title of the book which follows, although in our present Hebrew Bible it is the first verse of the book, preceded by the shorter form, "The Song of Songs." **Which is Solomon's.** The unity which is clearly to be traced through the book to the end makes it probable that the title is meant to ascribe the work to the authorship of Solomon. This is the opinion of the majority of critics. It must have come either from the wise king himself or from some one of his contemporaries or immediate successors. It has been remarked by Delitzsch that the absence of any description of Solomon as "king of Israel" or "son of David," as in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, confirms the view that Solomon himself was the sole author. *Redford.*

The poem is entitled "Song of Songs," *par excellence*, as in the parallel expressions—heaven

of heavens, King of kings, Holy of holies. It is a superlative song, in which everything is at its best. Gardens, fountains, flowers, fruits, spices, love, beauty, marriage, the joy of spring, the song of birds, these are in many songs ; but in this there is a profusion of excellence—a garden of nuts, an orchard of pomegranates, beds of spices, a mountain of myrrh, a hill of frankincense, flowers the most admired, beauty the most perfect, the beloved altogether lovely, the bride all fair and undefiled, the love strong as death, the marriage a royal marriage ; everything choice and incomparable. D. F.

The Bride in the King's Chambers. Chaps. 1 : 2 ; 2 : 7.

2-4. *The Prologue.* The Song commences with two stanzas recited in praise of the king

(now absent) by a chorus of virgins belonging to the royal household (henceforth companions and attendants of the bride), to whose sentiments of admiration and love they give expression before she speaks herself. The alternate use of singular and plural ("me," "we," "the virgins") shows that we have here the song of a chorus, not of the bride speaking in her own person. Each stanza ends with the refrain, "they love thee." Expositors, Jewish and Christian, interpret the whole as spoken by the Church of the heavenly bridegroom. T. L. K.

2. Wine and the fragrance of sweet spices filled the highest ideal of things delightful. We need not wonder, therefore, that the charms of the beloved one were set forth in such terms in a nuptial song. Translating them into the language of the Christian heart, we might put it thus: "Oh, for some manifestations of my Saviour's presence and love! His work meets every want of my nature and of my case as a lost soul. His name, therefore, embodies every excellence; His favor is more to me than all the universe beside. Give me the witness of His love, and take away all else you will, yet I am more than blessed."

4. "Draw me; so will we run after thee." It will be seen that this is *prayer*. Considered as prayer, it implies conscious weakness and a sense of dependence for help. Now the thing to be noted is that this is precisely Christian experience. Every really Christian heart cries out to God, saying, Draw me more and more into a deeper, purer love; apply to my soul the strong attractions of Thine own love, by the power of Thine own Divine Spirit; then I may safely promise that I will run after Thee. H. C.

There is one point on the very face of the text which it is important to notice. We may come to God collectively, but we are drawn to God each one individually. Draw *me*; *we* will run after Thee. Notice how this effectual drawing will begin to show itself in those who have been, indeed, the subjects of it. Obedience to an impulse of God will be instant. A "drawing" never takes effect to-morrow. Real religion is always in the present tense. It is Abraham's "Here am I!" It is Isaiah's "Send me!" It is Christ's "Lo, I come!" The man who is really drawn so loves the drawing that he always wants to be drawn more and more. He finds that it is so pleasant. He is always trying to get nearer. Therefore he is a man of much prayer, because he is nearer at such times. He wants oneness, closeness, and identity with Christ. J. Vaughan.

Into his chambers. Made me a member of his household. This is true of every member of the chorus as well as of the bride.

T. L. K.—**Make mention of thy love.** When the soul is inflamed with the love of God, that affection will be active and discover itself in all it does or suffers in the service of God.

Bates.—Love cares not what it is nor what it does, so that it may but advance the Lord Jesus. It makes the soul willing to be a footstool for Christ; to be anything, to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all. T. Brooks.

If we would grow in love for Christ, we must let our thoughts rest on His love for us, rather than on our love or on our lack of love for Him. Any contemplation of our own hearts, in their relation to our Saviour is heart-chilling, is heart-contracting; but any contemplation of our Saviour's abounding love for us is heart-warming and heart-expanding. The practical question for each soul is not, Do you love Christ? but, Do you realize how wonderfully *Christ loves you*? S. S. T.

Oh my God, love is Thy great and special gift. All good is from Thee. Come down into this heart, for it cannot come up to Thee! Dwell in me by the Spirit of love, and I shall dwell by love in Thee. Through Thy grace I love Thy Word, Thy image, Thy work, and how heartily do I love to love Thee, and long to know and love Thee more. And if "all things be of Thee, and through Thee, and to Thee," surely this love is eminently so. It means Thee, Lord. It looks to Thee; it serves Thee; for Thee it moves and seeks and sighs; in Thee it trusts; and the hope and peace and comfort which support me are in Thee. Baxter.

The Bride and the Daughters of Jerusalem.

Vs. 5-8.

A rustic maiden, lately brought into the king's chambers, makes excuse to the chorus for her rude appearance and dark complexion, while innocently acknowledging the beauty which commends her to the king. T. L. K.

5. The expressions are to be divided as is sometimes the case in Hebrew diction, "I am black as the tents of Kedar, but comely as the curtains of Solomon." Bishop Lowth.—Volney says, the tents of the Bedouin Arabs, woven of goats or camel's hair, are black or brown. Parkhurst.—The tents of the wild Arabs are to this day of a very dark or black color, being made of the shaggy hair of their black goats. D'Arvieux.

6. **Look not upon me.** In wonder or

scorn at my *swarthy* hue. It was acquired in enforced but honest toil, *the sun hath scanned me* (or, "glared upon me") with his burning eye. She uses here a different word from that rendered "look" above, a word twice found in Job (20 : 9 ; 28 : 7), and indicating in the latter place the piercing glance of a bird of prey. **My mother's children ;** or, sons, a more affectionate designation than "brothers," and implying the most intimate relationship. Children of the same mother are wont (in the polygamic East even more than with us) to be specially attached to one another. **Were angry with me.** Comparing 8 : 12, and note there, we may conjecture that this anger was but a form of jealous care for their sister's safety. They sought by engaging her in rustic labors to preserve her from idleness and temptation, albeit with a temporary loss of outward comeliness. **Mine own vineyard ;** literally, *my vineyard which is mine*. These, her first words, exhibit the bride's candor and simplicity. She next addresses the still absent beloved one. T. L. K.

They made me. A great deal of religious and benevolent work is done evidently as unto man, and not as unto God. We neglect our own vineyards because others call us away, and we obey. We become engrossed. We become too ardent. We are keeping the vineyards of others, just, perhaps, that it may be said that we are keeping their vineyards, and that we may have the praise of the fruit of the vineyard, or that we may please those who are connected with the vineyard. The occasion of self-neglect is suggested in these words : "They made me keeper of the vineyards." *S. Martin*.

Not merely made keeper ; you may be put into an office, yet fail to do its duties faithfully and well. But the suggestion here plainly is, that the vineyards of others were diligently kept, while by a fatality which might be thought unparalleled, if it were not one of the commonest of things, the vineyard at home was neglected. Probably there are few who have reached middle age, and have incurred the responsibilities of domestic life, who can think of the text without some inward self-reproach. The matter is one of wide concern when we remember that every Sunday-school teacher, every visitor of the sick or the poor, every human being who is called to say a word of warning to an erring creature, or a word of encouragement to a weary one, every father and mother whose example and conversation and entire life, to its least detail, may affect the impressionable nature of their child, is called to

keep the vineyard at home, if they would not have it scatter the slight seeds of mighty evil wide and far. We are all of us watched by far more eyes than we think of ; and spiritual characteristics in us may reappear in those who have no intention of imitating us, but who insensibly fall into ways which they continually see. The great lesson of the text is, care for your own soul ; care for the souls of your children ; care for the souls of your friends ; care for the souls of all you know and do not know. Every vineyard under the wide skies, where you can pull up a weed or cast one good seed, the smallest—of that vineyard God has made you keeper. So much the more diligently see that you keep your own ; so much the more earnestly, as you would successfully mind the things of others, look to yourself. A. K. H. B.

7. Tell me. She seems to dread a public reception by the king, and would fain meet him alone. **Whom my soul loveth.** A phrase recurring several times in chap. 3 : 1-5. It expresses great intensity of affection. "Thou whom my soul loveth, so I call Thee ; for the whole universe of rational creatures were unable to express Thy name." *Gregory of Nyssa*.

8. The chorus are the speakers here. Their meaning seems to be, If thy beloved be indeed a shepherd, as thou callest him, then seek him yonder among other shepherds, but if a king, thou wilt find him here in his royal dwelling. Thus invoked, the Beloved appears and addresses the bride.

Entrance of the King. Vs. 9-14.

This section consists of two stanzas of equal length (vs. 9-11 and 12-14). It is regarded (as well as that which follows, 1 : 15 ; 2 : 7) by the ancient commentators (both Jewish and Christian) as expressing "the love of espousals" (Jer. 2 : 2) between the Holy One and His Church. T. L. K.

9. This comparison will not be deemed coarse when it is considered what beautiful and delicate creatures the Eastern horses are, and how highly they are valued. It is very remarkable that a Greek poet, Theocritus, has made use of a similar comparison to a Thesalian steed to express the beauty of Helen. *Bishop Percy*.

9-11. Thus the king expresses his admiration of her beauty. Solomon imported his chariot horses from Egypt, models of beauty in form and of grace in motion. It is noticeable that the king himself provides for his bride the richest ornaments of gold and silver to set off

her personal beauty. The corresponding spiritual facts are obvious.

12-14. The bride responds. Her admiration and affection find expression in terms borrowed from the sweet odors and lovely flowers of her native clime. In v. 13 her thought is unexceptionably pure and fine. Her beloved is a bundle of odoriferous myrrh which she binds upon her bosom to wear it permanently there, where its perfumes may regale her with perpetual delight. This bundle of myrrh was placed there for its fragrance—admirably representing the precious associations that cluster about the name and memorial of Jesus in every Christian's heart. His very name is fragrant with all sweet odors, exhaling the breath of heaven. H. C.

*The Beloved and the Bride. Chaps. 1 : 15-17 ;
2 : 1-7.*

A dialogue ensues between the king and the bride, commencing with six responsive couplets, in which each in succession develops the thought or returns the commendations of the other (1 : 15-2 : 3). It is noteworthy that almost every term of praise and endearment here employed may be exactly paralleled by those elsewhere made use of in Scripture to describe the relations of Israel or the Church to the Heavenly Bridegroom.

15. The king speaks : *Lo, thou art beautiful* (the same word as in Ezek. 16 : 13, 14, 15, 25). Compare Psalms 45 : 11, "So shall the king desire thy beauty." Outward beauty is of course the first here thought of ; but in the bride this outward fairness is accompaniment of an inward beauty indicated in the following : "Thine eyes are doves," innocent, meek, and loving. The bride is herself called "a dove" (2 : 14 ; 6 : 9). T. L. K.—To understand the force of this expression, we must not refer it to our common doves or pigeons, but to the doves of Syria, which have large and beautiful eyes. Those who have seen the fine Eastern bird, the carrier pigeon, will require no further commentary on this verse. *Sir T. Browne.*—The eyes show more than any part else the inward affections of the mind ; and *doves' eyes* are the emblems of simplicity, candor, sincerity, and purity. *Bishop Patrick.*

16. The bride replies : *Lo, thou art beautiful, my beloved* ; compare Isa. 5 : 1, "song of my beloved," and 33 : 17, "thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty ;" both, perhaps, conscious references to this Song, Isaiah being the only prophet who thus speaks of the Holy One of

Israel as *dōdi* ("my beloved," Vulgate), the term constantly employed by the bride throughout the Song to designate him "whom her soul loveth."

Yea, pleasant. More than corporeally beautiful, full of moral grace and charm. So Psalms 27 : 4 and 90 : 17 speak of the pleasantness of the Lord, using the same word. "Christ is beautiful," says Bede, "in His divinity, pleasant in His humanity ;" "beautiful in His own nature," says Bernard, "pleasant as manifested to us in grace." **Green.** Or, "flourishing." The epithet is appropriate for a bank or natural bed of grass and flowers, on which we may imagine the bride to be seated with the king, but not for an article of furniture, an ordinary couch or bed.

17. The king replies, in reference to the last words of the bride : *The beams of our houses here are cedars ; our galleries are cypresses, i.e.,* the tall umbrageous forest-trees shut us in, as we sit together on this grassy bed, like the roof and walls of a many-chambered house, while cypress avenues on every side seem like the long-drawn corridors of a stately palace. The words are often assigned to the bride from not observing this sense and the antiphonal character of the whole passage. T. L. K.

The reader will not fail to notice that the love portrayed in this song between the two parties is mutual and the expression of it is promptly responsive, each vying with the other in terms of endearment and in assurances of affection. So the Lord through Jeremiah (2 : 2, 3) said of Israel : "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness. Israel was holiness unto the Lord." H. C.

In Solomon's Song we have a representation of the highest of all earthly affections in its supreme passion and purity ; the very ideal of the reciprocal love of two human beings for each other in body, soul, and spirit. And in this we have an inspired representation of the great ideal of spiritual love—the mutual love between Christ and His Church. God's love for His Church is early represented under the image of sponsal affection, with its beautiful weakness as well as strength. "The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." This sweet and solemn idea revived ages after its first expression, and kept clothing itself in a poetry which drew its riches from historical events. In the forty-fifth Psalm—that song upon "lilies," of

“lovely things”—where inspiration surges joyously from the Psalmist’s lips, the application becomes too clear to admit of serious discussion : “ King’s daughters were among thy honorable women.” And then with echoes from the Book of Ruth, coming thick and fast, “ Harken, O daughter, and consider ; incline thine ear ; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house ; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty : for He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him.” Again and again we have those unspeakably tender passages in the prophetic Scriptures, where the Almighty deigns to represent Himself as bearing the same relation to His Church which the spouse bears to

the betrothed. Especially is it to be noticed that, in the Hebrew Canon, the concise and pathetic Hosea comes next after the Canticles. In a series of unmistakable allusions, the faithlessness of the actual Israel is put in contrast with the love of the ideal Israel. In Hosea the Song of Songs is given back in sighs. This view of a large portion of the Old Testament makes it in the highest degree probable that when we come to a song, of which we are told that it is Solomon’s, and “ the most excellent of songs,” and of which we know that it alone has been preserved out of a thousand and five, it should be intended for the Divine song of a Divine love. *Bishop W. Alexander.*

CHAPTER II.

1 I AM a rose of Sharon,
A lily of the valleys.

2 As a lily among thorns,
So is my love among the daughters.

3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my beloved among the sons.
I sat down under his shadow with great delight,
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.

4 He brought me to the banqueting house,
And his banner over me was love.

5 Stay ye me with raisins, comfort me with apples :
For I am sick of love.
His left hand is under my head,

6 And his right hand doth embrace me.

7 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,
Until it please.

8 The voice of my beloved ! behold, he cometh,
Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart :
Behold, he standeth behind our wall,
He looketh in at the windows,

He sheweth himself through the lattice.

10 My beloved spake, and said unto me,
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

11 For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone ;

12 The flowers appear on the earth ;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land ;

13 The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom,
They give forth their fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock,
in the covert of the steep place,
Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ;

For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards ;
For our vineyards are in blossom.

16 My beloved is mine, and I am his :
He feedeth his flock among the lilies.

17 Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away,

Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart

Upon the mountains of Bethel.

1. TAKING up the king’s thought (1 : 17), the bride replies : “ And I am like a lovely wild

flower springing at the root of the stately forest-trees.” (Chap. 2 ought to have begun at

1 : 15, or chap. 1 to have been continued to 2 : 7.)

Lily of the valleys. The lily is the favorite flower of the Song, and is mentioned seven times.

2. The king resumes, taking up the bride's comparison : "As the lily excels in beauty the thorny shrubs among which it grows, so my friend excels her companions."

3. As the apple-tree. The bride's answer closing the gentle strife : "As the 'tap-puach' with its fragrant fruit excels the barren trees of the wild wood, so my beloved his associates and friends." The bride continues speaking to the end of v. 7. (From 3^b, "I sat down," to end of v. 5, she enlarges the thought of 3^a.)

4. His banner ; or, "standard." Compare Num. 1 : 52 ; 10 : 14, 18, 22, 25, where the same word is used of the great military ensigns which preceded the tribes on their march through the wilderness. The standard is the rallying-point and guide of the individual soldier, giving to each encouragement and confidence in the weariness of the march, or the extremity of conflict. *Hengstenberg*.—So the bride, transplanted from a lowly station to new scenes of unwonted splendor, finds support and safety in the known attachment of her beloved. His "love" is her "banner." The thought is similar to that expressed in Moses' altar-name, "Jehovah-nissi" (Ex. 17 : 15). T. L. K.

Among the choice things of the prepared banquet, the chief is rest. It is only the Gospel of Jesus Christ which has the exclusive prerogative to give a man rest. If there can be anything on this side of heaven worthy to be mentioned with that rest—the feeling of a forgiven soul—it is intimacy with God Himself ; the nearness, and consequently the acquaintance with God's mind, into which the Christian is at once, though it be progressive, yet at once admitted ; as soon as he obeys the drawings of the spirit and comes near to God. It is the actual presence of Christ which becomes dear to an advancing Christian. He has had His grace, but He wants Him. Therefore, more and more as a believer lives, you will find him meditating on the Person and the Being of Christ. J. V.

Find out what the Christian life is by living it. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, the things that He hath prepared. The feast in the Christian's heart, the antepast of heaven, is not understood by verbal pictures of it, but only as we ripen spiritually for the relish of it. When the bridegroom leads His spouse to the banqueting-house, there is no at-

tempted enumeration of the delicacies in store. It is only said, how finely ! that "the banner over her is love ;" leaving it for a growing faith to learn what He will give His people, whose own meat and drink it is to do His Father's will. "Come and see." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." "Knock, and it shall be opened." F. D. H.

6. His left hand, at chap. 8 : 3, is rendered as a wish or prayer, and so it ought to be here : "Oh, that His left hand were under my head, and that His right hand did embrace me !" Let Him draw me to Him with entire affection.

7. I charge you. The bride concludes with an adjuration to the chorus, which has been variously interpreted. It should be rendered : *I adjure you . . . by the gazelles, or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken love until it please.* The affection or passion in itself, not its object, is here meant. The bride is still speaking, not the beloved, nor the sacred writer in his own person. This adjuration, three times significantly introduced as a concluding formula (2 : 7 ; 3 : 5 ; 8 : 4), forms, so to speak, one of the axes on which the whole composition turns. It expresses one of the main thoughts of the poem ; namely, that genuine love is a shy and gentle affection which dreads intrusion and scrutiny (hence the allusion to the gazelles and hinds, shy and timid creatures), but dangerous in its strength and vehemence if heedlessly awakened. The complementary thought is that of chap. 8 : 6, 7, where love is again described, and by the bride, as a fiery principle, a lightning-flash from the Eternal One, "strong as death," and tenacious as the grave in jealous hold of the object of possession.

The Visit of the Beloved. Vs. 8-17.

The bride relates to the chorus a visit which the beloved had paid her some time previously in her native home, situated in a garden or vineyard (like those described by modern travellers in the Lebanon), perched among rocks, and only to be reached by climbing a precipitous path (v. 14) leading up from the plain or valley. Here the beloved finds her on a fair spring morning, and solicits her company. The bride, immersed in rustic toils, refuses for the present, but confessing her love, and her delight in his companionship, bids him return at the cool of day and spreading out of evening shadows. It is a springtime of affection which is here described, still earlier than that of the former chapter, a day of pure first-love, in which, on

either side, all royal state and circumstance is forgotten or concealed. The whole scene has been thought to represent the communion of a newly awakened soul with Christ, He gradually revealing Himself to her, and bidding her come forth into fuller communion. (*Bossuet.*) T. L. K.

8. The voice of my beloved! better, *sound*. Not a voice, but the sound of approaching footsteps is meant. (Compare Isa. 13 : 4, where the same word is rightly rendered "noise.") The beloved does not speak till v. 10. The mountains, or hills over which he bounds, are mentioned again at chaps. 2 : 17 and 8 : 14, as if they were His favorite haunts. So the bride elsewhere speaks of herself as hieing to the hill of myrrh and frankincense (4 : 6). T. L. K.

9. Like a roe or young hart. These lovely harts are very timid, and descend at night to the plains to feed among the lilies until the daybreak and the shadows flee away (v. 17). We shall meet these graceful gazelles all through Syria and Palestine, and the more you see of them the greater will be your admiration. Persian and Arab poets abound in references to them. *W. M. Thompson.*

10. My beloved spake, and said. Some find a difficulty in this clause, as being inconsistent with the dramatic character of the poem elsewhere carefully maintained. The right interpretation of the whole passage (2 : 8-17), as a monologue of the bride narrating a past event, disposes of this difficulty. Reporting the invitation addressed to her by the beloved, she is obliged to indicate that she is giving his very words.

Rise up. *Arise, my friend, my beautiful one, and come away.* A stanza of eight lines (vs. 10-13) begins and ends with this refrain, in which the beloved invites the bride to come forth with him into the open champaign, now a scene of verdure and beauty, and at a time of mirth and mutual affection. The season indicated is that of spring after the cessation of the latter rain in the first or paschal month (Joel 2 : 23), *i.e.*, Nisan or Abib, corresponding to the latter part of March and early part of April. Six signs of the season are given. T. L. K.

11-13. Here is a charming spring picture, with more exact and accumulated allusions to the beauties of nature than often occur together in sacred books. It is the more engaging from the strict coincident fitness of all of them to express the time of year. The Hebrew poet has followed nature closely, and with the most gratifying results to the taste and imagination.

We can see something of this ; but how much stronger must have been the aspect of natural truth thus imparted to the poem, in the eyes of those whose personal observation and periodical experience made them intuitively conscious of the truthfulness of all these details ! The passage relating to the singing of birds is highly interesting, being, with a single exception (Psalm 104 : 12) the only allusion to the song of birds in the Bible. *Kitto.*

Their fragrance. That the blossom of the vine may give a fragrant smell in hot countries is shown by the practice of the ancients, who used to put the dried flowers of the vine into their new wine in order to give it fragrance and a pure or flosculous spirit. *Bishop Percy.*

14. The beloved proceeds in another stanza of four lines still to urge the bride to come forth from her seclusion in her rock-girt home, in which she is hidden dove-like from the world. T. L. K.

All this is true to nature. Hearts that really love delight to make the loved one happy. The feeling is that all life is dull and all pleasure tasteless unless enjoyed as well by the object of our tender affection. Every earthly good becomes tenfold more a joy to us when we may share it with those we love. These principles of our social nature are beautifully set forth in this song, and with them yet another—viz., that the beauties and charms with which God has enriched the realm of nature—the music of birds, the fragrance and beauty of flowers, the countless charms of spring after the winter is over and gone—have a wonderful sympathy with the pure love which the same Great Father has provided for in the social nature of the sexes in their mutual relation to each other. The thing to be specially noted here is that the inspired author of this song seizes upon this beautiful exemplification of wedded love to illustrate the deep and pure affection which exists in such richness and power between God and His redeemed people. God would assure us of the strength and tenderness of this love on His part, and would call forth responsive love on our part in return. Blessed are they whose hearts do respond with overflowing soul ! H. C.

15. The beloved has asked to see her countenance and hear her voice, and the bride answers by singing what appears to be a fragment of a vine-dresser's ballad, insinuating the vineyard duties imposed on her by her brethren (1 : 6), which prevent her from immediately joining him. T. L. K.—The Shulamite does not accept his invitation ; she does not show herself.

The beloved likens her to a dove hiding in the clefts of the rocks. If she cannot follow him, at least he begs to see her face, to hear her voice ; he asks her for a song. She replies by a song in which she reminds him of the commands of her brothers, which oblige her, as well as her younger sister perhaps, or other young girls, to guard the tender shoots of the vine against the depredations of the little foxes. Thus do we hear echoing on through the ecstasies of the Shulamite all the emotions, pleasing or painful, of her past state of watching. *Godet.*

Little foxes that spoil the vineyards. We learn from Dr. Shaw, that "jackals of the lesser kind eat roots and fruits and frequent the gardens every night." So Haselquist says, "There are many of these animals near the convent of St. John in the desert, about vintage time ; insomuch that the owners are obliged to set guards over the vines to prevent these creatures from destroying them." These, then, are clearly the animals which are here meant. *Fragments to Calmet.*—The little foxes get through or over the most closely constructed hedge which encloses the vineyard. They not only filch the fruit and devour the grapes, but what is far worse gnaw the branches and roots, and so *destroy* the vines. Smaller creatures still, those of the insect tribe, are referred to in the Bible as having and using a consuming and destructive power. It speaks of the ravages of the palmer-worm, the locust, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar. Most frequently it alludes to the moth, an insect common to every clime, that penetrates every dwelling, that makes its insidious, unseen way into the smallest, most hidden and closely shut recesses, where with sharp but invisible tooth it cuts into and consumes the carefully laid garments, hiding itself from view by the very process of ravaging and fattening upon the juiceless thread. The "little foxes," as these smaller destroyers also, suggest the truth that *by far the greatest amount of moral evil among men is wrought by sins that are hidden*, that act subtly and insidiously because so gradually and with such small seeming force. As moral character is mainly formed by the aggregate of minute influences, human and Divine, so the evil effects wrought upon character are wrought mainly through the instrumentality of little sins. Character is most seriously damaged, most effectually destroyed, by gradual, unnoticed yieldings to selfish temper and unregulated desire, by slight but repeated deflections from truth and right, or omissions of duty. B.

There are no little sins. There was a time when all the evil that has existed in the world was comprehended in one sinful thought of our first parents ; and the evil now is the numerous and horrid progeny of one little sin. *J. Howell.*

—Little lies are seeds of great ones. Little treacheries are, like small holes in raiment, the beginnings of large ones. Little dishonesties are like the drops that work through the banks of the level ; a drop is an engineer ; it tunnels a way for its fellows, and they, rushing, prepare for all behind them. *Anon.*

It is common to be conscientious in great, without being so in small matters. Many there are who would not steal or tell a downright falsehood ; who would perhaps endure the extremest sufferings before they would relinquish some cherished opinions, and whom probably nothing on earth could tempt to commit any great or glaring offence against real or conventional proprieties ; yet they will daily, hourly, without scruple—apparently without the consciousness of doing wrong—be guilty of certain little dishonesties, things that will not perhaps be productive of direct or positive injury to any one, but nevertheless are as truly the result of imperfect or dormant conscientiousness as if they involved the loss of much coin. *Robert Chambers.*

Although we must fight against great temptations with an invincible courage, and the victory gained against them be extremely profitable, yet it may happen that we may profit more in resisting small temptations. It is very easy to forbear stealing other men's goods, but hard not so much as to covet or desire them ; very easy not to bear false witness in judgment, but not easy to avoid detraction in conversation ; very easy not to be drunk, but hard to be sober ; very easy not to desire another man's death, but hard not to desire some inconvenience to him ; easy to forbear defaming our adversary, but hard not to despise him. *De Sales.*

Little things are unforeseen ; they return every moment ; they come in contact with our pride, our indolence, our haughtiness, our readiness to take offence ; they contradict our inclinations perpetually. It is, however, only by fidelity in little things that a true and constant love to God can be distinguished from a passing fervor of spirit. *Anon.*

There is a sort of continued attrition, resulting from our necessary intercourse with the world, which of itself deadens the movements of the soul ; there is, moreover, a continued temptation to yield in little points, under the notion of conciliating ; to indulge in little

things, to forego little strictnesses, to omit little duties ; and all with the idea that what looks so light cannot be of real moment. And by these littles, thousands stumble and stumble on, getting more and more careless, nearer and nearer to indifference, lowering the Christian standards, suffering religion to be peeled away by inches, persuading themselves that they can spare without injury such inconsiderable bits, and not perceiving that in stripping the bark they stop the sap. *Melville.*

The worst sin is not some outburst of gross transgression, forming an exception to the ordinary tenor of a life, bad and dismal as such a sin is ; but the worst and most fatal are the small continuous vices, which root underground and honeycomb the soul. Many a man who thinks himself a Christian is in more danger from the daily commission, for example, of small pieces of sharp practice in his business, than ever was David at his worst. White ants pick a carcass clean sooner than a lion will. *A. M.*

The special peril to the honesty of business men is this, that qualified methods of doing business, of securing bargains, of influencing markets, will come gradually, silently, and universally into vogue, governing with so absolute and ubiquitous a control the interchanges of all mercantile life, that any nonconformist must go out of business or out of the world ; which methods are not grossly dishonorable, but when thoroughly sifted and strictly tested by the immutable principles of justice and truth, are found to be *off the track, oblique* to the straight and true course ; and that each trader, each artisan, each producer, will in his own walk yield, point by point, the little deviations about which he cannot help the consciousness of some scruples, which he is almost afraid to look at in too clear a light, but which are so sanctioned and sustained by this common law, that how to draw out of the sweep of the current he cannot see. Dare any man confidently affirm that a rigid application of the Divine law, the precepts of Christ, to this sphere of life, would not necessitate a recasting of much of the standard code ? Oh, will not Christian men beware how these slight departures, these trivial but gainful obligations get currency with them, and to plead before the world the sanctity of Christian indorsement ? "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." *A. L. Stone.*

It is curious to notice that the very characteristics which commonly earn for a sin the name of little are often just the characteristics which in reality enhance its sinfulness, and render it pre-eminently worthy of being called great. For

example, an ingenious prevarication would be usually considered far less sinful than a downright awkward falsehood. But the kernel of truth which it contains makes it *more* sinful, not less. It shows its perpetrator to be a cultivated liar. Judged, too, by its effects, it may often be discovered to be a lie of surpassing magnitude. . . . Little sins not only cause a vast amount of suffering, but they have the most fatal effect upon character. A great sin, severely punished and bitterly repented of, is not all likely to be repeated. The sins which seem to be little, just for that very reason, and also because they are generally unpunished, are likely to be first of all ignored by a man, and then repeated, till at last their total effect may be to render his character hopelessly and irretrievably bad. A number of very little sins will make a very great sinner. Our so-called little sins, too, have the most fatal moral effect upon the characters of others. They are just the sins which others will be likely to imitate. The average man is more likely to be infected by such a sin as scandal than he is to be infected by such a sin as theft. Therefore these little sins do the most widespread moral mischief in society. If we desire to form for ourselves a perfect character, a studied avoidance of little sins is of the first importance. Our habits depend upon the way in which we comport ourselves ; not in great and startling emergencies, but rather under the simple, common circumstances of our common daily life. Everything we do or say leaves us somewhat different from our former selves, and is productive of good or evil to numbers of our fellow-men. Every action we perform, every word we utter, every thought we think, has wide-spreading, far-reaching effects—effects that will eternally endure. Stand in awe and sin not. *A. W. Mommie.*

It is only man's littleness which discovers no importance in trifles. Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle. The most deplorable failures in Christian consistency and uprightness may, generally, be traced back to a very small departure from duty. Little sins are as wrong as larger ones, and in the end come to the same thing. Among these little sins which mar happiness or hinder usefulness may be reckoned a sour and crabbed temper ; the giving way to ease and self-indulgence ; dishonesty in our ordinary dealings, and jealousy, a weakness which few would confess that they have yielded to, and yet multitudes are made miserable by its evil influence. In religious character there is nothing unimportant, and the smallest inlets

of sin should be carefully closed. Earnest prayer and diligent effort should be employed, that the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts may be more thorough and pervading. *J. N. Norton.*

The avoidance of little inconsistencies, little weaknesses, little follies, little indiscretions and imprudences; little indulgences of self and of the flesh; little acts of indolence or indecision, or slovenliness or cowardice; little equivocations; little touches of shabbiness or meanness; little bits of covetousness and penuriousness; little indifferences to the feelings or wishes of others; outbreaks of temper or crossness and selfishness or vanity—the avoidance of such little things as these go far to make up at least the negative beauty of holy life. And then attention to little duties of the day and hour in public or private dealings, or family arrangements; to little words and looks and tones; little self-denials and self-restraints; little plans of kindness and thoughtful consideration for others; to punctuality and method and true aim in the ordering of each day—these are the active developments of holy life, the rich and Divine mosaics of which it is composed. It is of small things that a great life is made up; and he who will acknowledge no life as great save that which is built up of great things will find little in Bible character to admire or copy. *Bonar.*

God made the soul to be a mirror to reflect toward Himself and upon others His truth and purity, His goodness and love. Each little sin puts a trifling spot upon the surface, and it is the aggregate of these little flecks which gradually film over the whole surface and prevent the designed reflection of the Divine beauty. *He* formed each soul to be a member of a vast system of spiritual worlds, and set for it a place and an orbit wherein it might revolve in harmony with all, around His own central light. And not more certainly would the most trifling aberration of a world of our planetary system start it forth from its course upon another and disastrous one, than does the least sin, if not mercifully counteracted by Divine interposition, tend to impel the sinning soul away from its sphere of light and safety into one of darkness and destruction. *B.*

16. Man has nothing to do with any creature but as with a loan. The heart that holds and the treasure that is holden are only upon a lease. The man who calls anything his own will wake up to-morrow and find it gone. Christ is the property, the only property a man has or ever can have in any world. God never revokes that. And Christ carries with Him the

universe, and carries with Him all that is of real value in this life. “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” *J. V.*

17. “Until the day breathe,” literally; or, “till the day blow fresh.” There is peculiar beauty in this expression; in those warm climates the dawn of day is attended with a fine refreshing breeze, of the most delightful kind. *Bishop Percy.*—Until the fresh evening breeze (so well known as an object of expectation to the inhabitants of Eastern lands) spring up in what is called (Gen. 3:8) “the cool” or *breathing time of the day*. **And the shadows flee,** meaning that they lengthen out, and finally lose their outlines with the sinking and departure of the sun (compare Jer. 6:4). As the visit of the beloved is most naturally conceived of as taking place in the early morning, and the bride is evidently dismissing him till a later time of day, it seems almost certain that this interpretation is the correct one which makes that time to be evening after sunset. The phrase recurs in chap. 4:6. *T. L. K.*

She is obliged to defer until the evening the walk to which she is invited. But her heart is none the less united to her friend; and when evening comes, and she will have finished attending to her rough work, she expects to see him coming toward her with eager steps, that they may enjoy the last hour of the day together. Did ever any poetry surpass the dazzling brilliancy of this picture? *Godet.*—He spends the day with his flocks in the cares of shepherd life. Her yearning heart awaits his return at nightfall, and thinks of him as gracefully overleaping the hills in the ardor of his warm love to greet her in their rural happy home. So the Christian heart delights to meet and commune with Jesus when the day and its labors are over and darkness shuts off the outer world and invites us to soul-communion with those we love. *H. C.*

Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away. Whatever the first use and intent of this phrase, it describes a waiting and a joy to come. And so the words answer well the purpose of suggesting the truth, that there are many things in life and destiny that are to be awaited. We wait for the full perfecting of character. We are keyed, not to attainment, but to the hope of it by struggle toward it. And it is the struggle, and not the attainment, that measures character and foreshadows destiny. We wait the renewal of sundered love. Love may suffer an eclipse, but it is as sure as God Himself that human love shall again claim its own. We wait for the mystery to be taken

off from life. Mystery may remain, but it will be harmonious mystery. The accusing doubt, the seeming contradiction, the painful uncertainty, will pass away, and we shall see "face to face," and know even as we have been known. We wait for full restoration to the presence of God. *T. T. Munger.*

It was Christ's arising in the world that made the day break and the shadows fly away. The types and shadows of the law were then abolished. It was his light that dispelled the mists of ignorance and idolatry; and he alone delivers the soul from the night of sin and the misery produced by it. All the stars, and the moon with them, cannot make it day in the world; this is the sun's prerogative; nor can nature's highest light, the most refined science and morality, make it day in the soul; for this is Christ's. *Leighton.*

The prayer of one that waits: Only let my Beloved vouchsafe His gracious presence with me, and enlighten me more and more, till we have a full knowledge of Him and of His will, and the light of it scatter all the shadows of the law. Let my Beloved also make haste to succor and relieve me in all difficulties and distresses; and show the same readiness for my preservation that He did (v. 9) for my first salvation. *Bishop Patrick.*

Live as the king hath said. Then life may be like the wind, but through it God shall be as near to us as to Elijah at Mount Horeb. It may be a shadow, but behind that shadow is the substantial honor of an immortal destiny. It may fly like a post, but it bringeth glad tidings of great joy. It may come forth like a flower and be cut down, but its fruits shall evermore abide. It may be swifter than a weaver's shuttle, but from its loom shall come our wedding garments of imperishable white. It may be a tale that is told, but it shall be like an Arabian tale, full of the movements of superior intelligences; and these not genii and fairies, but the Sacred Three. It may be a vapor that vanisheth away, but in its parting it shall be

like the clouds of the sunset, and shall be merged at last in the heavenly sea, whose tides majestic ebb and flow forever. It may be like a dream when one awaketh, but it shall be a dream of the glory of celestial courts; and, upon awakening, the reality shall exceed the dream; for when the day breaketh and the shadows flee away, behold we are with Him. *H. C. Stanton.*

In that day the capacities of our being shall attain their perfect development and complete satisfaction in the vision of God. In the heavenly country "the Lord Himself is her everlasting light," and the light that is in Him streams forth upon the children of light in one unending day. Blessed permanence of that unending day, that undecaying light! There is no night there! It is not advance and retrogression, but one unchanged progress; it is not the interchange of happiness and misery, but one unending song of the children of the day, rejoicing in the Everlasting Light. It is toward such a life we are pressing—a life where humanity shall be beautified with the beauty of God; a life where humanity shall be glorified with the glory that is reflected on it from the Everlasting Light. It is a life in which the powers of humanity are perfectly developed, and thus developed are fully satisfied; a life the very instinct of which is the service of God; where temptation is unknown and weariness no more besets our path; a life of one unending day, of one unclouded happiness, of one unceasing joy. *G. Body.*

For that day we all are, or ought to be, preparing. Some in the struggle of life here on earth, some in the silent calm of the world beyond the grave—we all have to look forward to the Great Day. Not in the Church militant here on earth, not in the Paradise of waiting souls, is the perfection of the new creation of God. For that day our work in this life is meant to fit and prepare us. No true labor is in vain; no pure aim or noble purpose really fails; no trial or suffering need be fruitless; all are to have their outcome, their fruition, their satisfaction in the perfected life, in the vision of God. *J. W. Hicks.*

CHAPTER III.

- 1 By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth :
I sought him, but I found him not.
- 2 *I said*, I will rise now, and go about the city,
In the streets and in the broad ways,
I will seek him whom my soul loveth :
I sought him, but I found him not.
- 3 The watchmen that go about the city found me :
To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth ?
- 4 It was but a little that I passed from them,
When I found him whom my soul loveth :
I held him, and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him into my mother's house,
And into the chamber of her that conceived me.
- 5 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,
Until it please.

- 6 Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all powders of the merchant ?
- 7 Behold, it is the litter of Solomon ;
Threescore mighty men are about it,
Of the mighty men of Israel.
- 8 They all handle the sword, *and* are expert in war :
Every man hath his sword upon his thigh,
Because of fear in the night.
- 9 King Solomon made himself a palanquin
Of the wood of Lebanon.
- 10 He made the pillars thereof of silver,
The bottom thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple,
The midst thereof being paved with love,
From the daughters of Jerusalem.
- 11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon,
With the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him in the day of his espousals,
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.

1-5. THE evening has come ; the beloved has not made his appearance. Night reigns around the Shulamite, and in her heart. The scene which follows is entirely imaginary. It will appear but natural, if we remember that it is in an ecstasy or trance which the writer is describing. *Godet*.

The Bride's First Dream.

Continuing her monologue of reminiscence, the bride relates to the chorus what appears to be an imaginary occurrence transacted in a dream (like that of 5 : 2-8). She is on her bed at dead of night, and seems to be seeking him "whom her soul loveth." She traverses the city seeking him, and after meeting and obtaining no help from the watchmen, suddenly finds the object of her search, and brings him to her mother's house and chamber. This short piece, which might be called "The unrest of love," appears to consist of four stanzas (vs. 1-4), of which the first (v. 1), and second (v. 2), conclude with the refrain, "I sought him, but I found him not ;" it is followed by the adjura-

tion to the chorus (v. 5). Critics of principles the most opposed (Mercier, Ewald, Delitzsch) find here (as at 5 : 2-8) the narration of a dream, and certainly a dream-like tone pervades the whole.

4. I held him. This begins the fourth stanza. The bride's mother is mentioned again at chaps. 6 : 9 and 8 : 2.

5. I charge you. This adjuration has the same meaning as before (see 2 : 7). It marks another principal pause in the poems.

ROYAL ESPOUSALS. CHAPS. 3 : 6-5 : 1.

Principal and central action of the Song, the bride's entry into the city of David, and her marriage there with the king. The Targum and other Jewish interpreters regard this part of the poem as symbolizing the "first" entrance of the Church of the Old Testament into the land of promise, and her spiritual espousals, and communion with the King of kings, through the erection of Solomon's temple and the institution of its acceptable worship. Christian Fathers, in a like spirit, make most things here

refer to the espousals of the Church with Christ in the passion and resurrection, or the communion of Christian souls with Him in meditation thereon.

Bridal Procession and Royal Entry. Vs. 6-11.

Two or more citizens of Jerusalem, or the chorus of youths, companions of the bridegroom (Origen), describe the magnificent appearance of the bride borne in a royal litter, and then that of the king in festive joy wearing a nuptial crown.

6. Who is this ; or, "Who is she?" (as at 6 : 10), an expression of admiration repeated also in chap. 8 : 5. In all three places it indicates the approach of the bride and the commencement of a new part of the Song. **Out of the wilderness ;** or rather, up from. "Wilderness" here (Hebrew, "midbar") is not an arid waste, but champaign or pasture-land, in contrast with the cultivated districts and garden enclosures round the city. T. L. K.

Like pillars of smoke. It is customary at Eastern marriages for virgins to lead the procession with silver gilt pots of perfumes. In the present instance so liberally were these rich perfumes burned, that at a distance pillars of smoke arose from them ; and the perfume was so rich as to exceed in value and fragrantcy all the powders of the merchant. *Burder.*—Frankincense and other perfumes are burned in such abundance round the bridal equipage that the whole procession appears from the distance to be one of moving wreaths and columns of smoke.

7. Probably the royal litter or palanquin in which the bride is borne, provided for her by the king's care and affection, and surrounded by his own body-guard consisting of *sixty mighties of the mighty men of Israel.*

8. Because of fear in the night. Against night alarms. The king's affection is expressed not only by the state in which the bride is conducted to the palace, but also by his

solicitude for her ease and safety on the journey.

9-10. A more magnificent vehicle provided for the bride's reception on her entrance into the city, in which perhaps the king goes forth to meet her. It has been made under Solomon's direction of the costliest woods of the Lebanon ; it is furnished with "pillars of silver" supporting a "canopy" (not "bottom") "of gold," with "a seat of purple cushions," while "its interior is paved with (mosaic work or tapestry of) love from the daughters of Jerusalem ;" the meaning being that this part of the adornment is a gift of love whereby the female chorus have testified their good-will to the bride, and desire to gratify the king. T. L. K.—Such of our readers as visited the "Crystal Palace" will at once call to mind the gorgeous howdahs and palanquins, rich in ivory, gold, and silver, which he saw in the Indian court, and which had been presented by an Eastern prince to the queen. *Kitto.*

11. Wherewith his mother crowned him. The king's mother is, of course, Bathsheba, to whom he already owes the crown of his kingdom. This is the last mention of her in sacred history. **The gladness of his heart.** His deepest, purest gladness, greater than "the joy of harvest," or than that of men "who divide the spoil" (Isa. 9 : 3), "the joy of the bridegroom over the bride" (Isa. 62 : 5). The same expression recurs in Isa. 30 : 29 and Ezek. 36 : 5.

This last verse, and indeed the whole of this part of the Song (3 : 6-5 : 1), is full of difficulty for those interpreters who adopt the hypothesis of the shepherd-lover. Compare the different and contradictory interpretations of Ewald, Umbreit, Renan, Bunsen, Holtzmann, and Ginsburg. Hitzig boldly cuts the knot, allowing indeed the whole to be (what it evidently is) a royal marriage, in which Solomon is throughout the happy and accepted bridegroom, but is thereby compelled to regard it as an episode only loosely connected with the main subject of the poem. T. L. K.

CHAPTER IV., 1-16 ; V., 1.

- 1 BEHOLD, thou art fair, my love ; behold,
thou art fair ;
Thine eyes are *as* doves behind thy veil :
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That lie along the side of mount Gilead.
- 2 Thy teeth are like a flock of *ewes* that are
newly shorn,
Which are come up from the washing ;
Whereof every one hath twins,
And none is bereaved among them.
- 3 Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet,
And thy mouth is comely :
Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegran-
ate
Behind thy veil.
- 4 Thy neck is like the tower of David builded
for an armoury,
Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers,
All the shields of the mighty men.
- 5 Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are
twins of a roe,
Which feed among the lilies.
- 6 Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee
away,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
And to the hill of frankincense.
- 7 Thou art all fair, my love ;
And there is no spot in thee.
- 8 Come with me from Lebanon, *my* bride,
With me from Lebanon :
Look from the top of Amana,
From the top of Senir and Hermon,
From the lions' dens,
From the mountains of the leopards.
- 9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, *my*
bride ;

- Thou hast ravished my heart with one of
thine eyes,
With one chain of thy neck.
- 10 How fair is thy love, my sister, *my* bride !
How much better is thy love than wine !
And the smell of thine ointments than all
manner of spices !
- 11 Thy lips, O *my* bride, drop *as* the honeycomb :
Honey and milk are under thy tongue ;
And the smell of thy garments is like the
smell of Lebanon.
- 12 A garden shut up is my sister, *my* bride ;
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
- 13 Thy shoots are an orchard of pomegranates,
with precious fruits ;
Henna with spikenard plants,
- 14 Spikenard and saffron,
Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of
frankincense ;
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.
- 15 *Thou art* a fountain of gardens,
A well of living waters,
And flowing streams from Lebanon.
- 16 Awake, O north wind ; and come, thou
south ;
Blow upon my garden, that the spices there-
of may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his garden,
And eat his precious fruits.
- 5 : 1 I am come into my garden, my sister,
my bride :
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice ;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey ;
I have drunk my wine with my milk.
Eat, O friends ;
Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

1-16. IN the current strain of the Song the respective parties extol each other's charms as if in a pleasing rivalry, laboring each to outdo the other in these mutual testimonies to their high appreciation of each other. The reader will be struck with the Oriental and pastoral cast of the imagery under which these points of personal beauty are set before us. Shepherd life furnishes a large share of the illustrations. The standard of what is deemed fair and beautiful is that of the children of the East in those early ages of our race. H. C.

The Bridegroom's Commendation of the Bride.
Vs. 1-6.

The king in a lyric song of five stanzas commends the beauty of the bride by images taken from various scenes and objects in different parts of his kingdom (vs. 1-5). The bride briefly answers (v. 6). T. L. K.

1, 2. Here, as in chap. 1 : 15, the sense of the Hebrew is precisely : "Thine eyes *are* doves ;" not, Thou hast eyes *like* a dove. The poetic conception is full and strong. The dove:

is the embodiment of whatever is tender, delicate, loving; so her eyes were best described by the one word, *doves*. A charming sight to the shepherd was his flock of goats, seeming to hang suspended from the beetling crags of Mount Gilead; such was the hair of the bride. So, too, the perfectly pastoral scene of a flock of ewes, fresh from their washing, with each her twins attending like a setting of jewels; such were her teeth. Utility is one element of beauty. A barren ewe would be a deformity and a grief—a thing out of order and in bad taste. H. C.

1. The hair of the Eastern goats is of a delicate silky softness, and bears a great resemblance to the fine curls of a woman's hair. *Bochart*.—Some of them had a fleece so fine that it was almost as soft as silk, such as was that spun by the women for the use of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:26). To this hair allusion seems here to be made in respect to its softness, as well as length and thickness. *Bishop Patrick*.—**2.** By this comparison are admirably expressed the evenness, whiteness, just proportions, and unbroken series of the set of teeth.—**3. Lips like a thread of scarlet**—that is, thin and slender, and of a bright red color, giving sweetness and grace to the discourse. Her neck, tall and slender, erect, moulded according to the most elegant proportions and adorned with gold and jewels, is happily compared with a tower of well-known elegance and distinction in the citadel of Zion, adorned with every variety of splendid armory. *Bishop Lowth*.

5. The reader will bear in mind that in Oriental usage the bosom was uncovered equally with the neck, and hence it was no offence against modesty and delicacy to speak of it as we would speak of the cheeks or of the eyes. The veil covered the bosom equally with the face—no more. H. C.

6. The bride, repeating some of her own words at chap. 2:17, and modestly interrupting the flow of the king's commendations (compare 7:9), says that she would now fain withdraw till eventide "to the mount of myrrh and hill of frankincense," some quiet spot, it may be, in the garden of the palace which is the scene of their present meeting (*Delitzsch*). The dialogue is resumed in the evening (v. 7) of the same day. T. L. K.

No one, certainly, will question the beauty of this passage from the sacred idyl. It greets us with the freshness of morning-land upon it. Spice-winds and balm imbue the words. The tremulous shafts of the Eastern dawn are hard-

ly more clear and pure from taint than are these lines from the touch of artificial or mercetricious ornament. No passage of the earlier poetry of any land breathes a sweeter aroma of nature throughout it; and none more deftly, with an intuitive grace that outruns art and mocks imitation, selects the most picturesque forms and types to set forth its object. The poet must always accept it as a triumph not of practice, but of genius; not of artifice, but of nature, in his domain; while the Christian believer, finding in it the devout ascription to the Lord of love for His Church, which He was wont to meet for communion on the summits of Jerusalem, the very "mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense," will recognize the spiritual meaning which consecrates it, and will admire the wisdom which has preserved it for us. The Church walks here an Eastern maiden, pure as the morning, serene as evening, beloved with more than lover's tenderness by Him who is her Lord, with no spot on her, all fair and noble. And it belongs to us, to all who honor and love the Church, to make her now what he foresaw her, who wrote of her before Christ came. R. S. S.

The King's Invitation. Chaps. 4:7-5:1.

The king again meeting the bride expresses once more his love and admiration in the sweetest and tenderest terms and figures. She is for him "all fair" (v. 7) in her spotless purity. He calls her now (v. 8) "bride" for the first time, to mark it as the hour of their espousals, and "sister-bride" (vs. 9, 10) to express the likeness of thought and feeling which henceforth unites them.

8. The right understanding of the whole Song appears to depend on the interpretation of this one verse. The order and collocation of words in the Hebrew is grand and significant. *With me from Lebanon, O bride, with me from Lebanon thou shalt come, shalt look around (or wander forth) from the height* (literally, "head") *of Amana, from the height of Shenir and Hermon, from dens of lions, from mountain-haunts of leopards*. It is evidently a solemn invitation from the king in the sense assigned by Theodoret and others, comparing Psalm 45:10, 11, "Forget thy people and thy father's house, so shall the king desire thy beauty." Four peaks in the same mountain-system are here named as a poetical periphrasis for Northern Palestine, the region in which is situated the native home of the bride.

9-11. Expansion of the opening words (v.

7), "thou art all fair." The similes employed refer no longer to mere graces of corporeal form, as might be said of the former description (vs. 1-5), but to those of adornment, speech and gesture, as expressions of inward character and sentiment.

12-15. The loveliness and purity of the bride are now set forth under the image of a paradise or garden fast barred against intruders, filled with rarest plants of excellent fragrance, and watered by abundant streams. Prov. 5: 15-20 has images similar to those in this and other parts of the Song. T. L. K.—A garden whose fruits and even its odors were sacred for its proprietor alone; a fountain sealed, yielding its waters to him only, such was his beloved spouse, chaste and true to her vows, to the covenant of her God. So the living Church, so every true Christian, yields the heart's love to Christ supremely, to Christ alone. Naturally the Song at this point expatiates afresh upon the charms of such wedded love. The main source of the imagery is an Oriental fruit and flower garden, filled with the fragrant spice-bearing plants of the East. H. C.

13, 14, 15. Seven kinds of spices (some of them with Indian names, *e.g.*, aloes, spikenard, saffron) are enumerated as found in this symbolic garden. They are for the most part pure exotics which have formed for countless ages articles of commerce in the East, and were brought at that time in Solomon's ships from Southern Arabia, the great Indian peninsula, and perhaps the islands of the Indian archipelago. Such exotics may have been cultivated by Solomon in some of his "pardesim," but the picture here is best regarded as a purely ideal one, having no corresponding reality but in the bride herself. The beauties and attractions of both north and south, of Lebanon with its streams of sparkling water and fresh mountain-air, of En-ge-di with its tropical climate and henna plantations, of the spice-groves of Arabia Felix, and of the rarest products of the distant mysterious Ophir, must all combine to furnish out one glorious representation, "Thou art all fair!" T. L. K.

15. A living fountain bursting forth at the foot of the garden; a well-spring of cold flowing waters like those from the sides of Lebanon, fill out the ideal of this paradise of spicery and beauty, which means simply the charms of person and of character seen by the king in his bride. Let it be a perpetual inspiration toward more holiness that our Saviour finds an object of complacent regard in every grateful emotion of our souls toward Him; in every thought and

deed of love and service; in all our homage, in all our sympathy, in all our trust. At this point and in this view the prayer of the bride in the closing verse is beautifully significant. H. C.

16. Awake, O north wind. The bride's brief reply, declaring her affection for the king and willingness to belong to him. *My* garden in the first clause becomes *his* in the second. T. L. K.—As the breezes draw forth and waft along the sweet odors of a garden of spices, so God's Spirit stirs the emotions of love, calls forth the aspirations of faith, of prayer, of gratitude; indeed, of all holy affections and purposes. H. C.

This is the prayer of the Church, "Oh, let not then the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and His manifold gifts be wanting unto me; but breathe perpetually upon me, as the north and the south wind do upon this garden; then shall I be a paradise indeed; and not only fill the world with the sweet odor of the knowledge of Christ, but take the boldness to invite Him, the beloved of my soul, to come and reap the delightful fruits of His own care and labor." *Bishop Patrick.*

Precious fruits. The soul that has the life and the love of Christ in it cannot help producing fruit. It does so not by an outward, arbitrary law, but by the sweet inward, vital law of life and growth. And therefore it is that the free, unconstrained outpourings of the heart in a godly life—the natural, spontaneous, practical responses of the love of believers to the love of Christ—are more frequently in the New Testament called fruits than works. "Let my beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits." Fruitfulness is the peculiar distinction and glory of Christ's disciples. It is the result toward which all their efforts tend—the ultimate and highest object of their existence. They are united to Christ, quickened by His Spirit, enjoy all the means and privileges of grace, the dew of Divine love, the sunshine of Divine righteousness, the showers and breezes of Divine mercy, in order that they may bring forth fruit; and that more and more abundantly. We are to clothe the spiritual life of the Gospel—the precepts, the examples, the atoning death, the justifying righteousness of Christ, with an outward conduct becoming its purity and dignity. We are to embody the spiritualities of the unseen life in forms of daily life and conversation, such as will worthily represent their glory and grace. A beautiful character impresses itself upon the very features of the body, so that, looking upon

the lines of the countenance, we can read the soul within, and are attracted to admire and love it; and thus should the life of faith within—the reflex loveliness of Christ's character in the soul—exhibit itself in the homely garb of our outward every-day life, in order that those who cannot see the seal of the Spirit—the inward evidence of the doctrine of Christ, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it—may see its outward luminous sign in a living epistle, known and read of all men. Every Christian's life should be like the opal, exhibiting its pure transparency, the beautiful hues of grace; or like a prism, refracting the clear bright light of heaven into a seven-colored spectrum of honesty, truthfulness, purity, kindness, meekness, heavenliness, usefulness. *Macmillan.*

Chap. 5 : 1. My sister, my bride. So the king addresses the bride (*my sister-bride*) for the last time, declaring his supreme satisfaction and love.

Eat, O friends. These last words are best understood as a salutation from the king to his assembled guests, bidding them partake at the banquet in the gladness of his heart. A parallel might be found in Psalm 22 : 26, where Messiah at the close of His sufferings salutes his friends, the poor, and as they eat at His table gives them His royal blessing. So ends this day of outward festivity and supreme heart-joy. The Song of Songs attains its highest elevation, and its former half is fitly closed. The second half of the poem commences (v. 2) with a change of tone and reaction of feeling similar to that of chap. 3 : 1. It terminates with the sealing (8 : 6, 7) of yet deeper love. T. L. K.

Note on vs. 2-5. It is doubtless due to Oriental taste that so much is said of personal attractions, and that such a standard of personal beauty is assumed. But there is no disputing over questions of taste. The love of beauty was in our common nature in Paradise. Our Maker provided a large place for this element in our constitution, wisely designing it should conduce both to honorable marriage, and to its ministries of good to our race. It should be carefully noticed, moreover, that this book represents the parties as fascinated with each other's society and as mutually enjoying in a high degree the loveliness of spring, the fragrance of sweet odors, the charms of music, the beauty of flowers—in short, all the joys of this fair world which blend so perfectly with pure and

chaste love in human bosoms. A due regard to these features of the book ought to vindicate it from the aspersions sometimes thrown upon it, of having a morally pernicious tendency. In order to do justice to the author of this book and to those who placed it in the sacred canon, let us ask how it came to pass that men of pure mind, living in the ancient East, could have tastes so unlike ours? In answer, two facts have paramount influence: First, that general society was scarcely ever *mixed*. Outside the family circle the sexes rarely intermingled in society. A little reflection will show that the laws of taste and propriety in regard to what shall be considered delicate are determined largely by the fact of mixed society. Many things are tolerated in the presence of only one sex, which would be deemed entirely inadmissible in the presence of both. 2. A second fact pertains to different modes of dress. By the general law of language it is not indelicate to speak of those parts of the person which are usually exposed, uncovered, *e.g.*, the face, the eyes, the hair, the neck, the hands. If we see beauty in these exposed parts of the person, we never think it a violation of delicacy to speak of it. Now the people of the ancient East wore less clothing than we do, and covered less of the person. Especially they did not cover the bosom, and hence spake naturally of this as one point of personal beauty, as we now sometimes hear of the fair and beautiful neck. Suffice it to give the facts as they are, and to say that we must not impute to them indelicacy of mind and impurity of heart, because their tastes and standard of judgment differ from our own. I add, further, that in my view a fair translation of this book should aim to give its spirit rather than its precise letter; for obviously it should labor to make the book to us what it was to Solomon and his first readers—equally chaste and delicate in its allusions; equally far from liability to unhallowed associations. H. C.

ORIENTAL GARDENS.

The two prominent and radical ideas connected with an Oriental garden are *protection* and *productiveness*. The word for *garden* is the same in Hebrew and Arabic. The primary meaning of this word is *to cover, conceal, hide*. From this primary comes a secondary meaning having a twofold application as to a garden—namely, first, that which is covered in the sense of being itself surrounded or protected; and, second, that which covers, conceals, deeply

shadows the ground by reason of the abundance and luxuriance of its foliage. The fullest scriptural descriptions of an Oriental garden are contained in the Song of Songs, especially at chaps. 4 : 12-16 and 5 : 1, where the description opens with a reference to this radical idea of protection. This system of protection is to secure the garden against incursions on the part of robbers or wild beasts (Lam. 2 : 6). It also separates or marks off that part of the land which is subject to especial care and cultivation (Gen. 2 : 8, 16). It also indicates that portion in which the owner has a more peculiar, jealous, and unshared interest (Song of Songs 4 : 16 ; 8 : 12). The applications of the above facts will readily suggest themselves when the term "garden" is considered as a scriptural figure, as that to which the people of God are compared, as in Isa. 5 : 7, or as that which is used typically of the individual lover of God, as in the Song of Songs. The same comparisons and types are similarly employed in Arabic poetry.

The prominent idea of an Oriental garden is *utility* ; utility associated with beauty, utility never sacrificed to beauty, utility in the way of productiveness, fruitfulness. The utility of an Oriental garden is exhibited and developed especially in three respects : First, fruit-bearing. The garden abounds with trees producing fruit, such as the date-palm, fig, orange, pomegranate, mulberry, sycamore, lime, besides many other fruits, and oftentimes vegetables. Second, perfumes. It is well known how exceedingly fond Orientals are of aromatics, sweet-smelling perfumes ; and how by them the same are delicately compounded and extensively used. It is also well known what an extensive use and what an important significance incense, sweet-smelling perfumes, had in the ceremonial worship of the ancient Hebrews. Accordingly Oriental gardens were and are devoted in a considerable portion to the rearing of plants, both exhaling perfume as they stood in the garden and producing various aromatics as articles of commerce. Third, the trees and plants of an Oriental garden are, in many cases, made to serve various other useful objects, as, for example, the date-palm, the uses of which are very many, so that a person who owns twenty date-palm trees alone is considered to be not badly off. Arabic poetry celebrates three hundred uses which the date-palm serves.

The cultivation and development of the garden to reach the highest degree of productiveness is constantly and variously sought in Oriental lands, and attained with remarkable degrees

of success. The methods and implements of garden husbandry are to a considerable extent primitive and imperfect. This is well known ; but it is not equally well known how wonderful are those conditions of nature in Oriental lands which more than make up for deficiencies in human art. Thus, in Syria, the many natural fountains, the topography of the land, etc. ; in Egypt, the character of the soil, the action of the Nile upon and through the soil, the fertilizing deposits brought down by the Nile during its annual inundation, the heavy dews, etc. ; and in most Oriental lands, the tropical character of the climate, the uniformity of the temperature, and various other natural conditions, securing the development, productiveness, and luxuriant growth of plants. With these natural conditions, all are more or less familiar ; but with another condition of nature, serving greatly the same purpose, perhaps all are not equally well acquainted. It is mentioned with remarkable scientific accuracy in Song of Songs 4 : 16, where we read, "Awake, O north wind ; and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The north and south winds are wonderful agents in the Orient for promoting garden growth and fruitfulness. Three facts about these winds should be noticed : First, while the east and west winds are blighting, the north and south winds are very beneficent in their effects. The north wind is a strong cool, refreshing wind, which has the effect of strengthening the root, fibre, growth, entire life of the plant. The south wind is a warm, soft, moist breeze, whose genial influence greatly tends to hasten growth, to ripen fruit, to draw forth the perfume of flowers. Second, the north and south winds are very remarkable, on account of the abundant fertilizing moisture and particles which they carry about. This was known and appreciated in the earlier years of human history. Later it became known to and celebrated by the Greeks at the time of the military expeditions of Alexander the Great to India. Third, Wind blows from a colder to a warmer point. A map of the eastern hemisphere shows us that an immense amount of land lies north of the equator, and an immense amount of sea lies south of the equator. From April to October, therefore, the land lying north of the equator gets fiercely heated up by the torrid sunshine ; and consequently a strong wind is brought in from the sea, blowing steadily through this half of the year from the south. From October to April, the sun shines more in-

tensely over the ocean lying to the south ; and consequently a strong wind sets from land to sea, blowing with similar steadiness, through this other half of the year, from the north. And so the strengthening, fertilizing, fructifying north and south winds are also the uniform, prevailing, constantly blowing winds throughout the year, and year after year. And so the

Oriental garden grows, develops, abounds with constant and luxuriant productiveness.

The important application cannot be escaped when *garden* is used as a figure or type of the Lord's people, or of the individual lover of God. The great point is, cultivation, growth, development, utility, productiveness, constantly and evermore. *J. G. Lansing.*

CHAPTER V., 2-16.

- 2 I WAS asleep, but my heart waked :
It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh,
saying,
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove,
my undefiled :
For my head is filled with dew,
My locks with the drops of the night.
- 3 I have put off my garment ; how shall I put
it on ?
I have washed my feet ; how shall I defile
them ?
- 4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of
the door,
And my heart was moved for him.
- 5 I rose up to open to my beloved ;
And my hands dropped with myrrh,
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,
Upon the handles of the bolt.
- 6 I opened to my beloved ;
But my beloved had withdrawn himself,
and was gone.
My soul had failed me when he spake :
I sought him, but I could not find him ;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.
- 7 The watchmen that go about the city found
me,
They smote me, they wounded me ;
The keepers of the walls took away my mantle
from me.
- 8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if
ye find my beloved,

That ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

- 9 What is thy beloved more than *another* be-
loved,
O thou fairest among women ?
What is thy beloved more than *another* be-
loved,
That thou dost so adjure us ?
- 10 My beloved is white and ruddy,
The chiefest among ten thousand.
- 11 His head is *as* the most fine gold,
His locks are bushy, *and* black as a raven.
- 12 His eyes are like doves besides the water
brooks ;
Washed with milk, *and* fitly set.
- 13 His cheeks are as a bed of spices, *as* banks
of sweet herbs :
His lips are *as* lilies, dropping liquid myrrh.
- 14 His hands are *as* rings of gold set with
beryl :
His body is *as* ivory work overlaid *with*
sapphires.
- 15 His legs are *as* pillars of marble, set upon
sockets of fine gold :
His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the
cedars.
- 16 His mouth is most sweet : yea, he is alto-
gether lovely.
This is my beloved, and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

SEEKING AND FINDING. CHAPS. 5 : 2-16 ;
6 : 1-9.

The Bride's Second Dream. Vss. 2-8.

(Commencement of the Second Half of the
Poem.)

SOME time may be supposed to have elapsed
since the bride's solemn espousals with the

king in chaps. 4 : 7-5 : 1. A transient cloud
of doubt or estrangement is now passing over
her soul, as by the relation of this dream she
intimates to her friends. She has lost the so-
ciety of her beloved, but not his affection, and
seeks reunion with him (v. 8). Ancient allegor-
ical interpreters were not insensible to this
change of tone (which ought to have suggested

a better division of the chapters, chap. 5 beginning with v. 2), and have variously accounted for it. The bride's recital here of her second dream closely resembles that of the first dream (3 : 1-5), but is richer in details and somewhat more sad in tone.

2. I was asleep, but my heart waked. A poetical periphrasis for *I dreamed*. Cornelius à Lapide aptly quotes the ancient saying, "Dreams are the vigils of those who slumber; hopes are waking dreams." *The voice*; or, "sound." She hears him knocking before he speaks. *My sister, my love, my dove*, etc. True love rejoices in every kind of bond. (*Bossuet*.) So afterward, the bride says to him, "O that thou wert as my brother," in every sense mine.

3. I have put off. She makes trivial excuses, as one in a dream.

4. Put in his hand. *Through* (literally, "from") *the hole* (of the lock), in order to raise the pins by which the bolt was fastened. This is commonly done by means of the key ("maph-teach," opener), but may often be accomplished by the fingers only dipped in paste or some other adhesive substance. For such a purpose the beloved inserts his fingers, here anointed with the costly unguent, which will presently distil on those of the bride when she rises to open to him. (See Lane's description with sketch, "Modern Egypt.")

5. Sweet-smelling myrrh. Literally, "overflowing liquid," or "running myrrh," that which first and spontaneously exudes, *i.e.*, the freshest, finest myrrh. Even in withdrawing he has left this token of his unchanged love.

6, 7. I opened. Following more exactly the order of words in the Hebrew, we might render thus:

*Then opened I to my Beloved,
But my Beloved withdrew himself, was gone;
My soul went (from me) as he spake;
I sought him, but I found him not;
I called him, but he answered me not!
The watchmen, they that go their rounds in the
city, found me;
They smote me, wounded me;
They took my veil from off me
—The watchmen of the walls!*
Note the pathetic, dream-like repetition—"the watchmen of the walls." T. L. K.

2-7. The transitions of thought from point to point in this scene are somewhat sudden, yet on the whole the sense is obvious, the sketching is beautiful, and the moral instruction of the highest order. "I slept, but my heart waked"—restive, dissatisfied, under a painful sense of

something wrong in this state of moral distance from God. Then how touching the call to open to her beloved! With what patient discomfort, with what long-suffering compassion had her lord sought to restore the disturbed relations; how had he waited for her under the chilling dews of night to open the door and let him in! Then the conflict of emotions in her bosom; on the one hand, the excuses, the reluctance to the least effort; but, on the other, the fluttering of the heart, the sense of duty, the yearnings of reviving love! How sad her heart to find that he had turned away and was gone! Some bitter experiences of grief and penitence must be endured before she can have again the joys of his presence. All this is wonderfully true to Christian experience. H. C.

The bride misses her lord—is it in a dream?—the heart waking while the body slept. He comes to the door, and shows a willingness to enter; but she delays to admit him. When she does rise to open to the beloved, she is too late, for he is gone, and now she has to go out into the street on those dainty feet which she had grudged to put upon the floor, and hasten to and fro inquiring diligently after him. It is well with her when and only when she is with the lord, resting in his protection, trusting his loving-kindness, going up out of the wilderness leaning on his arm, or dwelling in the gardens, singing of his goodness and his beauty, his grace and his truth. D. F.

Christ is ever knocking at the heart: in those who have not received Him, that they may receive Him; in those who have received Him, that they may receive Him more fully. He knocks by all things which teach us to choose Him; that He is all, and all else nothing except as He is in it, and comes with it and makes it anything. Our souls are not the home of grace that it should, without effort on our part to detain it, remain there. Its home is God; it comes to us, visits us, dwells with us, but only if we with diligence keep it and use it. We are ascending the mount of God; if we relax we slip back. But then there follows a time of dreariness. God hides His face, and the soul is chilled. He withdraws His light, and the soul is dark. The remedies for this state are taught us in the bride. She opened that which was closed before. She mortified what she found amiss. When she found not him whom her soul loved she sought him perseveringly in the broad places of the city, in active duty. She was not hindered by discouragement. When she knew no more how to seek, she sent, exhausted, the aspiration to him, "I am sick of

love." That one word speaks all her ills, all her needs, as Martha and Mary sent to Jesus, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Desolations of soul are among God's choicest means of enlarged grace. By these God teaches the soul how unutterable an evil it is to be separated from Him. He teaches her to hate the memory of all sin, to cleanse herself from all lesser faults which come between her and God. He stirs the inmost heart, kindles her longings, increases her desires that, when they are increased and enlarged, He may fill them. *Pusey.*

Think, think believingly, seriously, constantly, O my soul, what a life thou shalt live forever in the presence and bosom of infinite, eternal love! He now shineth on me by the sun, and on my soul by the Sun of righteousness, but it is as through the crevices of my darksome habitation; but then He will shine on me and in me openly and with the fullest streams and beams of love. God is the same God in heaven as on earth, but I shall not be the same man. Here the windows of my soul are not open to His light; sin has raised clouds and consequently storms against my comforts. The entrances to my soul by the straits of flesh and sense are narrow, and they are made narrower by sin than they were by nature. Alas! how often would love have spoke comfortably to me, and I was not at home to be spoke with, but abroad among a world of vanities; or was not at leisure; or was asleep, and not willing to be awaked! How often would love have come in, and dwelt with me, and I have unkindly shut him out! When his table has been spread for me, and Christ, grace, and glory offered to me, how has my appetite been gone or dull! He would have been all to me, if I would have been all for him. But in heaven I shall have none of these obstructions. All old unkindness and ingratitude will be forgiven. I shall then be wholly separated from the vanity which here deceived me. I shall joyfully behold the open face, and attend the charming voice of glorifying love, and delightfully relish his celestial provisions. No disease will corrupt my appetite. No sluggishness will renew my guilty neglects. *The love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit* will triumph over all my folly, deadness, and disaffection; and my God-displeasing and self-undoing averseness and enmity will be gone forever. Study this heavenly work of love, O my soul! *Baxter.*

8. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem. The dream is therefore related to the chorus. The bride, now awake, is still seeking her beloved. The dream of his depart-

ure and her feelings under it have symbolized a real emotion of her waking heart.

The Bride's Commendation of the Beloved. Vs. 9-16.

The chorus, replying to the bride's charge with the question, "What is thy beloved more than another?" (v. 9) give her the occasion, which she eagerly seizes, for a glorious description of his beauty and sweetness of whom she is in search (vs. 10-16). It is also her response to the praises of the king on her bridal-day (4 : 1-5 ; 10-15).

10. The chiefest among ten thousand. Literally, "a bannered one among a myriad; that is, a leader of ten thousand warriors." T. L. K.

11-16. This is usually taken to describe the unclothed person, but nothing can be less in accordance with the language itself. Those parts of the person which custom exposes to view are indeed described; but as to those parts which custom conceals, it is the dress and not the skin which is described. For example, "His head is as the most fine gold, and his hair is curled, and black as the raven." What is this but the turban, gold-colored or ornamented with gold, and the raven-black ringlets appearing below it? Again, in v. 14, "His body is as bright ivory girded with sapphires." How admirably this corresponds with the snow-white robe, and girdle set full of jewels, as we see it in Sir Robert Ker Porter's portrait of the late king of Persia! But what is there in the unclothed body that looks like a girdle of sapphires? *Stowe.*

9-16. Carrying out the ideas of that age as to personal beauty and splendor, this portrait is exquisite, and gives us a transcendent model of a prince. Translating it from the sensual and earthly to the spiritual, it witnesseth most admirably to the beauties and glories of our Divine Redeemer. The reader will find it refreshing to compare this description with that given (Rev. 1 : 12-16) of the glorified Jesus as He appeared to the seer of Patmos. This is cast after the ideas of royal splendor which prevailed in the age of Solomon. That shown in Patmos is, however, by far the more majestic and sublime. H. C.

15. His aspect is like Lebanon. Of the two celebrated mountains in Judea, Lebanon and Carmel, the former was celebrated for its height, ruggedness, and the abundance of its vast and towering cedars; the latter for its richness and fertility, abounding with vineyards, olive grounds, and corn-fields. Hence the former is here employed to express mascu-

line dignity, as the latter is (7 · 5) to convey an idea of female beauty. *Bishop Lowth.*

16. He is altogether lovely. Literally, *the whole of him desires or delights.* So just before, "his mouth" all "sweetnesses" ("for breath, and speech, and smile," *Bossuet*), the plural substantives expressing the notion of the superlative. Theodoret, applying to our Lord the whole description, interprets well its last term: "Being at a loss for other terms of praise, she names Him finally by one Name. Why should I thus endeavor to express His beauty piecemeal, when He is in Himself and altogether the One longed for, drawing all to love, compelling all to love, and inspiring with a longing (for His company) not only those who see, but also those who hear?" T. L. K.

We hear Jesus saying, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." We go, and all, and more than all we asked for or could think of, we find in Him—grace and truth blended in perfect harmony, a beauty undimmed by a single blemish, a sympathy constant and entire, a love eternal, unchangeable, which nothing can quench, from which nothing can separate us. Here at last, and here only, do we find one wishing to be loved and worthy to be loved with the full devotion of the heart. Restless till it lights on Him, with what a warm embrace, when it finds Him, does the heart of faith clasp Jesus to its bosom! "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" may the watchman of the city say. The answer is at hand: "My beloved is the chief among ten thousand; He is altogether lovely. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine—my Lord, my God, my Shepherd, Saviour, Kinsman, Brother, Friend." *W. Hanna.*

The character of the Lord Jesus, as described by the evangelists, surpasses in depth, beauty, and comprehensiveness all that human thought and imagination could ever reach. It unites perfectly and harmoniously elements which are

blended nowhere else. His innocence, purity, meekness, and gentleness co-exist with His burning zeal, unremitting vigor, uncompromising severity, and holy indignation. His love of solitude and His sublime loneliness never prevent Him from entering into the wants and sorrows of men, or from descending to their ignorance, doubt, and weakness. His teaching, so Divine and yet so human, is perfectly lucid and clear, direct and convincing; in the simple intuition of His filial spirit He speaks the words of eternal life, in which all is truth, transparent, all-sided, eternal. He is a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and yet He never produces the impression of austerity and moroseness. He rejoices in spirit; He changes water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana; He takes little children into His arms and blesses them; He defends the joy of His disciples because the bridegroom was with them. We feel in His presence, as in the presence of the Son of God, holy, solemn, peaceful; of one who possesses without measure the spirit of joy and gladness, of joy unspeakable and full of glory. *Saphir.*

The growing Christian lives more and more under the powers of the world to come. There is a sense of the utter worthlessness of those things which have only the stamp of a lifelong value, and the immeasurable moment of those things which stretch on into eternity. And this substantiating of things hoped for, this evidencing conviction of things not seen, is faith. This firm outlook for its permanent glories is hope. And the play of these two great lights upon the soul is the preparation which God gives for bidding farewell to earth and entering into heaven. The face of Jesus, who is our righteousness, shines brightly on the soul that waits for Him. We who have known Him long, beholding His approach, can say, while we rejoice with trembling, This is our Beloved, and this is our Friend! J. W. A.

CHAPTER VI., 1-13; VII., 1-5.

6 : 1 WHITHER is thy beloved gone,
O thou fairest among women?
Whither hath thy beloved turned him,
That we may seek him with thee?

2 My beloved is gone down to his garden, to
the beds of spices,
To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine:
He feedeth *his flock* among the lilies.

4 Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem,
Overpowering as an army with banners.

5 Turn away thine eyes from me,
For they have overcome me.
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That lie along the side of Gilead.

6 Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes,
Which are come up from the washing;
Whereof every one hath twins,
And none is bereaved among them.

7 Thy temples are like a piece of a pome-
granate
Behind thy veil.

8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore
concubines,
And virgins without number.

9 My dove, my undefiled, is *but* one;
She is the only one of her mother;
She is the choice one of her that bare her.
The daughters saw her, and called her
blessed;
Yea, the queens and the concubines, and
they praised her.

10 Who is she that looketh forth as the morn-
ing,

Fair as the moon,
Clear as the sun,
Overpowering as an army with banners?

11 I went down into the garden of nuts,
To see the green plants of the valley,
To see whether the vine budded,
And the pomegranates were in flower.

12 Or ever I was aware, my soul set me
Among the chariots of my princely people.

13 Return, return, O Shulammite;
Return, return, that we may look upon thee.

Why will ye look upon the Shulammite,
As upon the dance of Mahanaim?

7 : 1 How beautiful are thy feet in sandals, O
prince's daughter!
Thy rounded thighs are like jewels,
The work of the hands of a cunning work-
man.

2 Thy body is *like* a round goblet,
Wherein no mingled wine is wanting:
Thy waist is *like* an heap of wheat
Set about with lilies.

3 Thy two breasts are like two fawns
That are twins of a roe.

4 Thy neck is like the tower of ivory;
Thine eyes *as* the pools in Heshbon, by the
gate of Bath-rabbim;

Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon
Which looketh toward Damascus.

5 Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,
And the hair of thine head like purple;
The king is held captive in the tresses
thereof.

1, 2. Whither is thy beloved gone?

This question put by the chorus, and the answer it receives from the bride, show that the loss and seeking are not to be taken too seriously. The bride, knowing better than her friends where the beloved is to be found, answers, without hesitation, that he is gone down into his garden and its spice-beds to feed his flock (in his character of shepherd, compare 1 : 7), and gather lilies (for her—so Bossuet); actions contradictory and irrational if the words be

literally understood. What the bride means is, that he, of whom she speaks, is a royal shepherd (possessed of a garden of rarest spices), and her own true friend to whom she also belongs, her "shepherd among lilies." T. L. K.

2, 3. It is remarkable how naturally the assurances of mutual devotion between her Lord and herself blend here with the love of nature—the beauties of flowers and the odors of sweet spices. Perhaps this may be a foreshadowing of the joys of the Paradise above. If in this

world, so fearfully cursed with sin, God has yet lavished such a wealth of beauty and loveliness, what may we not anticipate in that pure heaven where no sin exists to demand an expression of God's displeasure; where there is nothing to impose limitations upon the exuberant fulness of God's love of the beautiful, or upon His delight in the varied and endlessly diversified bliss of His obedient children! H. C.

3. I am my beloved's. Repeated from chap. 2:16, with a significant inversion. In that day of early love her first boast was her possession of him, "My beloved is mine;" now bound to him by closer ties, she begins by confessing that she is *his*. T. L. K.—So long as marriage remains the type of the union of the soul with God, of Christ with the Church; so long as the faithful attachment of one soul to another shadows forth the love of the heavenly Lover who "loved us and gave Himself for us," so long will religious feeling express itself in the language of the Canticles, so long will the soul that "is joined to the Lord" utter, as its deepest cry of adoration to its Redeemer, the words of the Song of Songs, "My Beloved is mine and I am His." E. Hopkins.

When Christ comes anew and reveals Himself to the soul free and full as ever, in another way than He doth unto the world, then the soul can say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." Not that the believer can use these words at all seasons. In times of darkness and in times of sinfulness, the reality of a believer's faith is to be measured rather by his sadness than by his confidence. But in seasons when Christ reveals Himself afresh to the soul, shining out like the sun from behind a cloud, with the beams of sovereign, unmerited love—then no other words will satisfy the true believer but these, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

When first he hid himself in Jesus, he found Him suitable to all his need—the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. But now he sees Jesus to be so full a Saviour, giving to the sinner not only pardons, but overflowing, immeasurable pardons; giving not only righteousness, but a righteousness that is all Divine; giving not only His Spirit, but pouring water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. The soul sees all this in Jesus, and cannot but choose Him and delight in Him with a new and appropriating love, saying, "My Beloved is mine." And if any man ask, "How darest thou, sinful worm, to call that Divine Saviour thine?" The answer is here, "For I am His." He chose me from all eternity, else I never would have chosen Him. He shed His

blood for me, else I never would have shed a tear for Him. He cried after me, else I never would have breathed after Him. He sought me, else I never would have sought after Him. He hath loved me, therefore I love Him. He hath chosen me, therefore I evermore choose Him. "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." *McCheyne*.

The dearest affections of Christ and the saints in heaven are mutual and reflexive. His propriety in the Church is His unvaluable treasure. He repeats the word *mine* in the sweetest and most tender manner. And the Church, with the same harmonious affections, speaks of Christ. My Beloved is the chiefest of ten thousand, He is altogether lovely. My Beloved is mine, and I am His. By all their expressions of joyful love and union, we may ascend in our thoughts and foretaste the joys of heaven, where the communion of Christ and the Church is entire and uninterrupted forever. If faith and love of our unseen Saviour produce "a joy unspeakable and glorious," as if believers were wrapt up to Paradise, or Paradise descended into them, what will be the sight and fruition of Him? *Bates*.

The Beloved's Commendation of the Bride. Vs. 4-9.

4. Fair. The fourth time that the bride is thus addressed at the commencement of a fresh dialogue. Tirzah and Jerusalem, named together as the then two fairest cities in the land.

5-7. Now follows the longest of the repetitions of the Song, marking the continuance of the king's affection as when first solemnly proclaimed (4:1-6). So Ibn Ezra, following the Targum: "The beloved repeats the same things here to show that it is still his own true bride to whom he speaks, the sameness in the features proving it."

8. There are threescore queens. An allusion to what may have been historical fact when the Song was written. The numbers (according to 1 Kings 11:2, 3) were afterward enormously increased.

9. My dove. The king proceeds in a yet tenderer strain to contrast the bride with all these other claimants for her royal estate or favor. She not only outshines them all for him, but herself has received from them disinterested blessing and praise:

"One only is my dove, my perfect one,
Her mother's only-loved one she,
The darling one of her that gave her birth;

The daughters gazed on her and called her blessed,
The queens and concubines, and sang her praise."

Allegorical interpreters have found it difficult to assign to this passage in all its details a good mystical sense, but in its ethical significance it is invaluable as a Divine witness to the principle of monogamy, under the Old Testament and in the luxurious age of Solomon.

10-13. This part of the Song commences with a short dialogue between the bride and the chorus, who address her, here only, as the Shulamite, and beg her to perform for their entertainment a sacred dance (7 : 1) of her own country (6 : 10-13). The bride, complying with their request, they sing some stanzas in her praise (7 : 1-5).

10. Who is she; or, *this*, as at 3 : 6. The question is asked by the chorus. **As the morning.** The glorious beauty of the bride bursts upon them like a second dawn (so the word ought to be rendered here, as at Josh. 6 : 15), as she comes forth to meet them at the commencement of another day.

11, 12. The bride answers, recalling the occasion on which she first met with the king, and won the love which has thus exalted her. Her words might be thus paraphrased : " You speak of me as a glorious beauty ; I was lately but a simple maiden engaged in rustic toils. I went down one day into the walnut-garden to inspect the young plants of the vale" (*i.e.*, the wady, or watercourse, with now verdant banks in the early spring after the rainy season), " and to watch the budding and blossoming of vine and pomegranate. Then, suddenly, ere I was myself aware, my soul" (the soul, the seat of the affections, is here the love-bound heart) ; " had made me the chariot of a lordly people" (*i.e.*, an exalted personage, one who rides on the high places of the earth). **Ammi-nadib ;** literally, *my people a noble one*. The reference is either to Israel at large as a wealthy and dominant nation under Solomon, or to the bride's own people (the Shulamites) in particular, to the chief place among whom, by her union with the king, she is now exalted.

13. Return, return. About to withdraw, the bride is recalled by the chorus, desiring yet a little longer to contemplate a grace and beauty which has won all hearts. The plural (" that we may gaze on thee") indicates the chorus as the speakers. The king has not yet appeared. **○ Shulamite.** Probably the same as " Shunamite," *i.e.*, a native of the

town or district of Shunem, situated in the territory of Issachar. T. L. K.

In this Song the names of the two leading personages are specially significant. The name Solomon (Hebrew, Shelomoh) means the peaceful one, the prince of peace. (It occurs in the Song, in chaps. 1 : 1 ; 3 : 11 ; 8 : 11, 12.) Whoever will carefully read Psalm 72, considered as written either by Solomon himself or by his father *for* him, and bearing in mind this significance of his name, will see that the very name had an outlook toward the person and work of the great Messiah. This view will be very much confirmed if we consider the promise made to David (2 Sam. 7 : 12-17, 19, 29) of a royal son whose rule should be universal, His influence most blessed, and His sway eternal—a son, not Solomon himself, but one like him in certain points yet indefinitely greater. Hence Solomon's use of his own name in this Song may certainly be supposed to look toward the typical or rather the prophetic use of his own name. This becomes far more obvious when we pass from the name of Solomon to that of his bride. It is Shulamith (twice occurring) (6 : 13), which is probably the Hebrew feminine of Shelomoh (Solomon). If he is the prince of peace she is the princess of peace. If his name bears in it a prophetic outlook toward the great Messiah, so does hers toward the bride of the Messiah, the Lamb's wife. H. C.

Dance of Mahanaim. The word generally designates a festival or sacred dance. But what is meant by the dance of Mahanaim ? The reply can only be conjectural. First, Manahaim was a Levitical city (Josh. 21 : 34, 38), among the mountains of Gilead, deriving probably both its sacred character and its name (" the twofold camp") from the angelic vision there vouchsafed to Jacob (Gen. 27 : 1-3). Annual festivals may have been held in memory of this event, at which the maidens came forth in the dances as at Shiloh (Jud. 21 : 21), so that " the dance of Mahanaim" would simply be a well-known sacred dance, taking its name from the locality in which it originated. Second, the word " Mahanaim" became in later Hebrew an ordinary designation for " the angels" or " angelic hosts" (*Delitzsch*). Some accordingly would render here " a dance, as it were, of angel-choirs," *i.e.*, one of peculiar grace and beauty, " perform for us some beautiful dance like those of the angel-choirs in heaven." The former of these interpretations is to be preferred. Nor is there anything incongruous with Oriental custom in a company of ladies asking one of their number to dance before them.

The Dance of Mahanaim. Vs. 7 : 1-5.

The Shulamite complies with the request of her attendants, and as she glides before them in the dance they sing in further commendation of her beauty of form and grace of movement (*Delitzsch*). The description borrows images (like those of chaps. 4, 5, and 6) from the whole range of nature and art in various parts of the Hebrew monarchy, differing, however, from all others in one respect, that the forms of beauty here enumerated are contemplated as in active movement before the eyes of the spectator. Beginning with the sandalled feet, as was natural in speaking of a dancing figure, it ends with the head and its wealth of native ornament, reversing the order of description in chap. 4 : 1-5. It consists, like that, of five stanzas nearly coinciding with the verses in the text. T. L. K.

All the monuments and pictures of ancient Egypt show us that the ancient Oriental ladies dressed so as to leave the busts fully open to view, and, of course, there could then be no impropriety in alluding to or describing that part of the person. It may be added, that this is the custom of modern Oriental as well as of ancient Oriental dress ; and we have ourselves seen women who would sooner die than allow their faces to be viewed by strangers, and sooner be flayed alive than be seen with the top of the head uncovered, who would, at the same time, be perfectly indifferent as to a display of a part of their persons which is in Eu-

rope carefully veiled. Yet even in this respect the customs of the East and West were not so different a few generations ago as they are at present, and hence there are expressions in our own poets parallel to those of Solomon, but which excited not the least uneasiness even in the most delicate minds, in the age in which they were produced. It was in such an age that our translation of the Bible was made ; and it does hence contain some expressions unsuited to the higher standard of Christian refinement which we have now reached. But these might be altered not only with safety, but with advantage to the sense ; for in this particular book of Solomon, it is especially allowed by all good scholars, that even to those who look only to the first or literal sense, and whose eyes are shut to the spiritual meaning, the Song of Songs is in the original a much more *readable* book than the authorized version represents it to be. *Kitto*.

5. Thine head upon thee. Compare and contrast with chap. 5 : 15. The king's aspect is there likened to the majestic heights of Lebanon, the bride's head here to the soft and rounded top of Carmel. **Hair . . . like purple.** The ancient purple was of different shades, from bright red to a deep violet black. The deepest shade is here meant. **The king.** No definite article in the Hebrew. The indefinite—"a king is bound in the tresses or windings of thy hair"—is much more poetical. The words indicate the king's approach, who is the next speaker. T. L. K.

CHAPTER VII., 6-13; VIII., 1-14.

7 : 6 How fair and how pleasant art thou,
O love, for delights !
7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree,
And thy breasts to its clusters.
8 I said, I will climb up into the palm tree,
I will take hold of the branches thereof :
Let thy breasts be as clusters of the vine,
And the smell of thy breath like apples ;
9 And thy mouth like the best wine,
That goeth down smoothly for my beloved,
Gliding through the lips of those that are
asleep.

10 I am my beloved's,
And his desire is toward me.
11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the
field ;
Let us lodge in the villages.
12 Let us get up early to the vineyards ;
Let us see whether the vine hath budded, *and*
its blossom be open,
And the pomegranates be in flower :
There will I give thee my love.
13 The mandrakes give forth fragrance,

- And at our doors are all manner of precious
fruits, new and old,
Which I have laid up for thee, O my be-
loved.
- 8 : 1 Oh that thou wert as my brother,
That sucked the breasts of my mother !
When I should find thee without, I would
kiss thee ;
Yea, and none would despise me.
- 2 I would lead thee, *and* bring thee into my
mother's house,
Who would instruct me ;
I would eause thee to drink of spiced wine,
Of the juice of my pomegranate.
- 3 His left hand *should be* under my head,
And his right hand should embrace me.
- 4 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,
Until it please.
- 5 Who is this that cometh up from the wilder-
ness,
Leaning upon her beloved ?
- Under the apple tree I awakened thee :
There thy mother was in travail with thee,
There was she in travail that brought thee
forth.
- 6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal
upon thine arm :
For love is strong as death ;
Jealousy is cruel as the grave :
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,
A very flame of the LORD.
- 7 Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it :
If a man would give all the substance of his
house for love,
He would utterly be contemned.
- 8 We have a little sister,
And she hath no breasts :
What shall we do for our sister
In the day when she shall be spoken for ?
- 9 If she be a wall,
We will build upon her a turret of silver.
And if she be a door,
We will inclose her with boards of cedar.
- 10 I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers
thereof :
Then was I in his eyes as one that found
peace.
- 11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon ;
He let out the vineyard unto keepers ;
Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring
a thousand *pieces* of silver.
- 12 My vineyard, which is mine, is before me :
Thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand,
And those that keep the fruit thereof two
hundred.
- 13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
The companions hearken for thy voice :
Cause me to hear it.
- 14 Make haste, my beloved,
And be thou like to a roe or to a young
hart
Upon the mountains of spices.

6-10. *The king and the bride.* Vs. 6-9 are spoken by the king, and v. 10 by the bride. The king addresses the bride, comparing her to palm, vine, and apple-tree for nobility of form and pleasantness of fruit ; and the utterances of her mouth to sweetest wine. T. L. K.

It is scarcely necessary to reiterate that these conceptions and illustrations of personal beauty and form are altogether Oriental in their cast, and cannot therefore be judged of in all respects by the standard of our age and country. This is wedded love, thoroughly mutual and promptly responsive, such as takes hold of the deepest sensibilities of our being. Here, too, as throughout this exquisite poem, it manifests the richest sympathy for rural life and for the thousand beauties and charms with which God has invested the face of this fair world. Need it surprise us that God should seize upon this

strong and rich affection of human souls to illustrate the love He bears to His people and the responsive love which His Spirit begets in their hearts to Himself in return ? Where else can a more vivid and perfect illustration of this spiritual love be found ? H. C.

10. His desire is toward me. All His affection has me for its object. The comparison of chaps. 2 : 16 and 6 : 3 confirms this interpretation. The bride is for the king a true Hephzibah (Isa. 63 : 4), one in whom is all his delight. She proceeds to exercise her power over his loving will.

The bride's invitation (7 : 11 ; 8 : 4). Responsive and antithetical to that of the king on the day of their espousals, in which he had asked her to forsake home and occupation for his sake (4 : 8), and dwell with him in Jerusalem. The bride in her turn now invites her

beloved to revisit in her company the lowly scenes of pastoral life, out of which his grace had raised her, and to which (though once forsaken at his bidding) her heart still innocently clings.

12. It is now again precisely the same season as that in which the king had first visited the bride on that well-remembered morning (2 : 8-17) in her mother's house. This thought enhances her desire to have him with her there again.

8 : 1. The bride continues to address the king. The thought of home and of having his presence with her there fills her heart. Royal rank and splendor are grown wearisome. The king once called her "sister" and "sister-bride." Would he were indeed as a "brother," her mother's own child whom she might meet, embrace, and welcome everywhere without restraint or shame. Her love for him is simple, sacred, pure, free from the unrest and the stains of mere earthly passion.

2. Who would instruct me. Another rendering gives a better sense both literal and allegorical — *thou shouldst teach me* (Isa. 54 : 13).

3. His left hand should be. The bride now turns to and addresses the chorus as before (2 : 6, 7). It is an exact repetition of 2 : 6, and here rightly rendered as expressing a wish, not as stating a fact. It introduces the last repetition of the bride's charge (v. 4), which forms the conclusion of this part of the Song. T. L. K.

THE RETURN HOME. Vs. 5-14.

Last Vows Sealed. Vs. 5-7.

The scene changes from Jerusalem to the birthplace of the bride, where she is seen by former associates and the members of her family coming up from the open champaign toward her mother's house, leaning on the arm of the great king her beloved.

5. Who is this? Compare and contrast with chap. 3 : 6, and following. There the bride is carried in procession, and with regal state, to meet the king her bridegroom ; here in sole companionship with him, and rustic simplicity, she leans on him as her beloved. In the former scene all is splendor and exaltation, but here condescension, humility, and loving charm.

Beneath this apple-tree I wakened thee. Masoretic pointing of the Hebrew text (the most ancient traditional interpretation to which we can appeal) assigns these words to the bride, but the majority of Christian Fathers to the king.

The whole passage gains in clearness by the latter arrangement, which supposes two speakers, first the king, reminding the bride of a happy past, and then the bride, taking occasion from his words to ask for an assurance of his enduring affection (vs. 6, 7).

6, 7. Set me as a seal, etc. The bride says this as she clings to his arm and rests her head upon his bosom. This brief dialogue corresponds to the longer one (4 : 7-5 : 1), on the day of their espousals. There the beloved sought and claimed the bride, here she seeks and clings to *him*.

6. For love is strong. This glorious assertion of the might and purity of true love gives the key-note of the poem. It forms, as Delitzsch has well observed, the Old Testament counterpart to Paul's panegyric (1 Cor. 13) under the New. The following is an attempt to analyze it. Love is here regarded as a universal power, an elemental principle of all true being, alone able to cope with the two eternal foes of God and man, death and his kingdom (Sheol).

"For strong as death is love,
Tenacious as Sheol is jealousy."

"Jealousy" is here to be taken only as another term for "love," expressing the inexorable force and ardor of this affection, which can neither yield nor share possession of its object, and is identified in the mind of the sacred writer with Divine or true Life ; so he goes on to describe it as an all-pervading fire, kindled by the Eternal One, and partaking of His essence : "A very flame of the Lord." If this be the right interpretation of the Hebrew word *Shalbebeth-Jab*, the poet of the Old Testament surpasses even Paul, and rises here to an intuition subsequently reserved for John, and by him attained only through a life-long communion with incarnate love : "God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4 : 16). This Divine principle is next represented as overcoming in its might all opposing agencies whatsoever, symbolized by water as the antagonistic element to fire in the natural world :

"Waters many have not power
To quench this love,
Nor streams to overwhelm it."

They may in a thousand forms hiss and strive against it, but the heavenly fire will be triumphant in the end. From all which follows that love, even as a human affection, must be revered, and dealt with as having its motive-power in itself, and not to be bought by aught

of different nature; the attempt to do this awakening only scorn:

“ Though one should give all substance of his house for love,
With scorn should he be scorned.”

Of such love as this, pure, unbought, and changeless, we believe that the Song of Songs was, in the first instance, designed to give an idealized representation. T. L. K.

In possession of her beloved, the Shulamite now sings of the strength of the bond which unites them to each other—love in all its sublimity. Love is not a feeling having its origin in man; it cannot, therefore, be purchased at any price. It is a flame of *Jah* (Jehovah), kindled by Him, and of which the supreme object should be Himself. The passion of the rich man who offers everything without giving himself will be treated with contempt, while the true love of the God who brings no present but who gives Himself has in it a power which can measure itself victoriously even against that of death and of the grave. *Godet*.—Verily, all His life was love: His suffering was fellow-suffering; His death a sacrifice of such priceless value, because it was the highest act of love, which at the cost of His own life sought only our salvation. And certainly He who thus loved still loves. Death cannot quench His love; no distance of time or place can limit it; no unfaithfulness on our side can blunt it. Glorious Gospel of the unbounded, the unquenchable love of Jesus for each, for all His people. This love is the burden of a song of which eternity itself shall never hear the close! *Van O.*

Some have been tempted to wish that the poem itself had closed with this triumphant strain, and some have even ventured to regard what follows as a spurious addition. Both were wrong. The concluding scene has its own significance and beauty, besides throwing light upon the past, and helping to illustrate the meaning of the whole.

The Bride's Intercession. Vs. 8-12.

A brief dialogue, commencing with a question and answer probably made by the brothers of the bride concerning a younger sister who will soon be old enough to be asked in marriage. How shall they provide for her when the day comes, or so that it may come well? The answer is given in the form of a parable: “If she be a wall,” *i.e.*, steadfast in chastity and virtue, one on whom no light advances can be made,

then let us honor and reward her. This fortress-wall shall be crowned as it were with a tower or battlement of silver. But “if she be a door,” light-minded and accessible to seduction (Prov. 7: 11, 12), then let us provide against assailants the protection of a cedar-bar or panel. In either case they wish to show themselves as mindful of the safety of their younger sister as formerly of that of the now exalted bride (1: 6; 2: 15).

10. I am a wall. The bride herself replies with the pride of innocence and virtue already crowned. She has shown herself to be such a fortress-wall as her brothers have alluded to, and her reward has been the royal favor, or, as she phrases it for the sake of a paronomasia, “her finding peace in the eyes of the peaceful one—*Shalom* with *Shelomoh*.”

11. Solomon had a vineyard. She next turns to the king, and commends her brothers to his favorable regard by means of another parable. Solomon owns a vineyard in Baal-hamon. This vineyard he has let out to tenants who have each to pay a rent-charge of a thousand silverlings into the royal treasury. The application follows.

12. My vineyard, which is mine. The bride also has a vineyard of her own (1: 6), her beauty and virtue faithfully guarded by these same brothers in time past. This vineyard now belongs to Solomon. Let him have “the thousand” which is his due—she is indeed herself henceforth entirely his—but let the faithful keepers have their meed as well. At least two hundred silverlings should be theirs—a double tithe of royal praise and honor.

13. The poem concludes with a versicle recited by the bride, renewing, at his request and for his ear, the memory of their first day of love.

14. Make haste. Better, *Flee, my beloved*. The bride complies with the king's request by repeating the last words of her former strain (2: 17), with one significant change. She no longer thinks of the possibility of separation. The “Mountains of Bether” (division) of chap. 2: 17 are now “Mountains of Besamim” (spices). His haunts and hers are henceforth the same (compare 4: 6). T. L. K.—Thus the voice of the bride, which opens the poem, lingers on the ear in its close, and suggests to us that the whole is as if from *her* standpoint *the aspiration of an ideal love*, breathing itself out in desire after the beloved object—that *the king may delight himself in her beauty*. *Redford*.

To common view, the Song of Songs seems to close abruptly. But the spiritual interpretation gives to it great emphasis and beauty, and renders it a most fitting termination of this high

discourse. It is an aspiration on the part of the Church, or of the individual soul, that the Lord will come and make good all the things that have been represented in these raptures of heavenly love. It closes, in fact, like the last book of the New Testament : " He that testifieth of these things, saith, Surely, I come quickly ; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." *Kitto*.
 —However one may interpret this inspired book, it will to the end of the ages furnish the Christian with the imagery and vocabulary of adoring love to Jesus, the lover of our souls. *Griffis*.

Communion with Christ may be interrupted, though union is not broken. From their own experience saints understand the alternations of withdrawal and manifestation on the part of the beloved, related in the Song. He is not always in the garden, or always at the table with them, but is in Lebanon or in the top of Hermon ; and when they miss Him, He often comes to them speedily and as with a sweet surprise, like a hart leaping on the mountains, and bounding on the hills. " His love in my heart casteth a mighty beat ; He knoweth that the desire I have to be at Himself paineth me. I have sick nights and frequent fits of love-fevers for my well-Beloved. Nothing paineth me now but want of presence. I think it long till day. I challenge time, as too slow in its pace, that holdeth my only, only true One, my well-Beloved from me. Oh, if we were together once !" *Rutherford*.—The Church now loves an unseen Saviour. She longs for her absent Lord, to whom she is joined in the marriage

covenant, and for whose presence she is being prepared and adorned with holy beauties by the Holy Ghost. " Rise up, my Beloved !" is her prayer. She waits the happy hour, when the Lord will gather His saints as the bride, and take them to the high mountains to be forever with Him. " Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Comfort one another with these words, all ye who love His appearing ! We have no relish for controversy about the time and manner of the Advent ; but we do want more realization of it as our " blessed hope," more thirst and more meetness for His presence. Let it be added, that this comes in well after the Book of Ecclesiastes. The weariness of heart under the sun is best cured by the fervor of spirit expressed in the Song of Songs. The world's vanity has no power to occupy or chafe those who are full of a Divine and heavenly love. The world's gayeties are nothing to hearts which are possessed by the " blessed hope," or thrilled with a joy unspeakable. D. F.

Thus closes this exquisite Song, of which one cannot easily say whether most to admire its poetic beauty, its painting of wedded love, or its transcendent presentation of the love which Jesus bears to His people and which they should, and sometimes do, bear to Him. The latter, which I take to be the real significance of the poem, is a theme of exhaustless interest ; the theme which wakens the strongest and purest emotions ever known to the Christian heart in this life ; the theme which is destined to swell the song of the redeemed in their eternal home of purity and bliss. H. C.

AUTHORS CITED, AND KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS.

[The titles and publishers of leading works, *additional* to those given in previous volumes, are here appended to the names of authors. A helpful service in the interest of readers and writers is thus subserved.]

	Thomas Adams, 1614.		Rev. E. Bayley.
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	William Adams, D.D.		A. J. F. Behrends, D.D.
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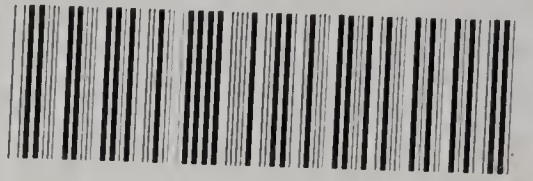
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